



COVID-19 AND EDUCATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT: The paper looked into Covid-19 and Education in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State. Covid-19 brought about so many issues resulting to learning lacuna in our tertiary educational institutions in Rivers State. The paper deployed secondary sources of textbooks, internet sources, and newspapers in generating literature. It covered the concept of novel covid-19 pandemic. It x-rayed students learning abilities under the ravaging covid-19 era, economic strength of students and parents to acquire learning facilities, and the remote learning under covid-19. The experiences of learning gap, the general impact on our educational system were equally examined. The paper concluded that Covid-19 obstructed learning and teaching activities in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Parents and students had a drop in their economic life to enable them buy data and other materials to cope with the new normal method of learning. The remote learning and teaching was entirely novel to the tertiary terrain in Rivers State. There were no initial training and change management approach prior to the emergency which gulped the entire world. The paper suggested that management of tertiary institutions in Rivers State, should from time to time organize seminars and workshops on e-learning, the e-learning process should be made part of the mainstream learning process by the management of tertiary institutions in Rivers State and that academic staff in tertiary institutions should engage in personal development and not necessarily waiting for management all the time.

Key Words: Covid-19, Education, Tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Learning abilities, Economy of learning, Remote Learning.

INTRODUCTION

The corona virus disease nicknamed COVID-19, an acronym 'CO' for corona, and the 19 stands for the 2019, the year the novel virus was detected (UNICEF, 2020). The Corona virus is a disease that was first tested in china specifically in Wuhan city in the year 2019 around December. Corona virus disease (COVID-19), a novel pandemic has become an albatross on the world's economy, religious activities, funerals, business, education, public healthcare systems, agriculture and socio-cultural events. On education, the COVID-19 pandemic has threatened education through schools and universities closure (World Bank, 2020). Approximately 1.725 billion students are severely impacted by closure of educational institutions across the world amid the COVID-19 outbreak. The school closure was to protect health and

safety of students (UNESCO, 2020). Education in Ghana and many other countries in the Nigeria is in limbo.

Virtually all students in Rivers State, including tertiary institution students in Rivers State are currently missing face-to-face instruction due to COVID-19. Many parents and educators thus share a common worry: When the pandemic subsides, kids will return to school with lower achievement. There are also concerns that the gap between high- and low-achieving students will become larger. Given the need to address these concerns, we decided to use prior test scores from millions of students and leverage research on summer learning patterns to make informed projections of what learning loss due to the pandemic might look like. Ultimately, we wanted to know: What sort of learning losses could we expect from the shortened 2019-20 school year?

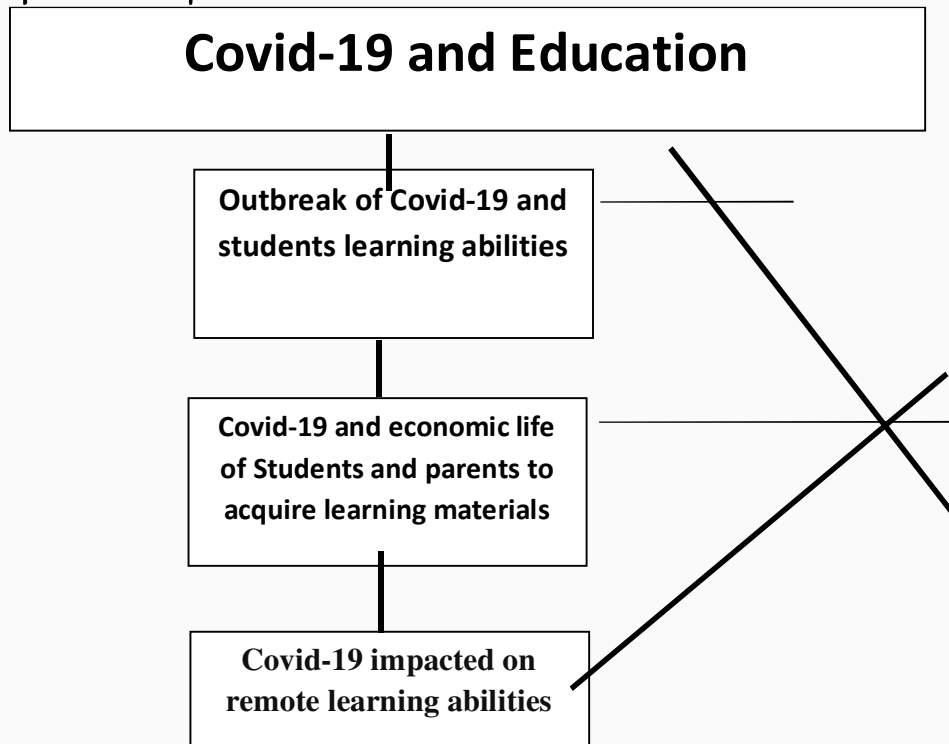
Answering this question is complicated by the unique circumstances of COVID-19. Current school closures have added to the time that most students already spend at home during the summer months without explicit face-to-face instruction from teachers.

Meanwhile, lecturers in tertiary institutions are scrambling to adapt content for an online platform and parents are juggling work responsibilities (if not joblessness) with caring for and educating their own children. Students themselves are faced with isolation, anxiety about a deadly virus, and uncertainty about the future. In so many ways, the current situation is unprecedented for most people alive today. These issues have in no small measure impacted on students' academic achievement. The Covid 19 pandemic has caused the students to look away from education. In most cases inadequate technology has caused the virtual learning to be a burden and frustration to the students. There are parallels between the current situation and other reasons OTM students miss school that can give us insight into how COVID-19 may affect achievement. This includes research on the effects of out-of-school time on learning due to absenteeism, weather-related school closures (e.g., Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans), and summer vacation. Existing evidence can provide a rough sense of how time out of school due to COVID-19 will affect achievement. We relied heavily on past precedent when trying to understand how COVID-19 might impact achievement in the short and medium term. We used a national sample of over 5 million students in grades 3-8 who took MAP Growth assessments in 2017-2018. These assessments enable such estimates because growth is administered multiple



times per year, which means test scores are available later in the year such that changes in achievement during the year can be understood and anticipated. We compared typical growth for students who completed a standard-length school year to projections under multiple scenarios. These scenarios were directly informed by out-of-school-time research.

Conceptual Clarification



REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The concept of Covid-19 in Nigeria

The epidemiology of COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria occurred on July 19, 2020, About 14.6 million confirmed cases have been reported worldwide, with recoveries exceeding 8.7 million, according to figures compiled by WHO and US-based Johns Hopkins University. The coronavirus pandemic has claimed over 608,435 lives across the world since originating from Wuhan in China last December. As at 19th July 2020, the number of corona virus confirmed cases in Africa has exceeded 700,000 while the death toll on the continent is hearing 15,000. The first case of the corona virus in Africa came from exposure to international contacts travel, trade, tourism or business. COVID-19 appears

to thrive in cities where it can be transmitted quickly at close range through movement and frequent contact between people. African countries with the highest level of international contact such as Egypt, South Africa, Nigeria and Morocco are among the hardest hit in the early stages of the corona virus crisis (African Center for Strategic studies, 2020). African urban areas create conditions where viruses can spread quickly in crowded informal settlements. African countries with the largest urban populations all have megacities; Lagos, Cairo, Addis Ababa, Kinshasa, and Johannesburg (African Center for Strategic studies, 2020). Ghana had its first two confirmed cases of the COVID-19 on 12th March, 2020 with two people believed to have returned from Turkey and Norway. As at 17th July, 2020 the total confirmed cases in Ghana stood at 27,667 with 4,270 active cases, 23,249 recoveries and 148 deaths (Ghana Health Service, 2020).

The virus spreads through coming into contact with contaminated surface or with an affected person, thus through the droplets of saliva or mucus that comes when the person coughs or sneezes into the air or the hand. The virus can stay on surfaces, example; tables, doorknobs and handles, hands, phones, and when an unaffected person comes into contact with any of these surfaces and touches the eye, mouth and nose, Symptoms of this novel corona virus according to Nishiura (2020), can range from mild (asymptomatic) to severe illness (symptomatic). Some of the symptoms include, fever, dry cough, common cold, headaches, running nose, sore throat, bodily pains, and difficulty in breathing.

Covid-19 and Students Learning Ability

The preliminary COVID slide estimates suggest students including those in the tertiary institutions could begin fall 2020 with roughly 70% of the learning gains in reading from the prior year relative to a typical school year. In mathematics, students may show even smaller learning gains from the previous year, returning with less than 50% of the gains. In lower grades, students may be nearly a full year behind in math compared to what we would observe in normal conditions. Though not shown in the figures, we produced similar estimates of learning loss based on research showing the effect of being absent on achievement. That is, we simply assumed students' learning during COVID-19 school closures would be akin to what occurs when students miss school, a large assumption given the online learning and homeschooling now occurring. Results for absenteeism-based projections were often more dire.



We also examined how much more variable achievement might be in the fall that is, how wide the range in achievement might be between very high and very low-performing students. This range has implications for whether teachers can provide similar content to all students in their classrooms, or if they might need to further differentiate instruction based on a broader range of needs. Finally, the effects of COVID-19 our study cannot examine may be the ones most worthy of addressing. Prior research on students displaced by Hurricane Katrina indicated that they had difficulty concentrating and often manifested symptoms of depression in the months following the hurricane. Understanding these impacts and how best to support students' social and emotional needs after the huge disruption of COVID-19 will be essential. Many students may face greater food insecurity, loss of family income, loss of family members to the coronavirus, and fear of catching the virus themselves. While the scale of the COVID-19 school closures is novel, the inequalities in our school systems are unfortunately anything but new. Our models cannot account for the reality that the crisis is having an unequal impact on our most underserved communities. Nonetheless, we hope these analyses, which synthesize what we know from existing bodies of research, will inform tomorrow's decision-making.

Covid-19 and Economic life Students in Terms of Acquiring Academic Materials

The impacts of the economic recession sparked by the pandemic response, which have already begun will be deepened for some time to come and unless countries mount major efforts to respond, the pandemic will have a long term effect on human capital and welfare (World Bank Group Education Report, 2020). What are the measures put in place by world leaders to curtail the spread? WHO has initiated independent panel for pandemic preparedness and response (IPPR) to evaluate the world's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The panel will be co-chaired by former Prime Minister of New Zealand Helen Clark and former President of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The panel will present an interim report at the end of the year. Closure of all borders, schools (public and private), ban on all social gathering. Lockdown in major cities Frequent washing of hands under running water, the use of alcohol based sanitizer (alcohol 65-80 %), coughing or sneezing into flexed elbow or a tissue and disposing it into dustbins, avoid touching nose, eyes and mouth with unclean hands, avoid touching untreated or unsanitized surfaces, maintaining social distancing, wearing of mask to cover the nose and mouth

(WHO, 2020 & GHS, 2020). Among the measures put in place by the government of Ghana to fight the virus include the following:

- Cost of living allowance for civil/public servants
 - Reduction in cost of internet data
 - Enhanced contact tracing and tracking
 - Stimulus package to businesses
 - LEAP support to vulnerable through mobile money 50% pay increase for frontline workers from May to July 2020
 - 50% cut on utility bills (light and water bills).
- Several conspiracy theories and myth busters exist concerning the origin, cause and spread of the corona virus. Among them are; 5G radiofrequency communications network. The virus do not attack young people. The virus do not spread in warm climate. High Intake of Akpeteshie (local gin) will boost ones immunity against COVID-19.

The COVID-19 does not actually exist and that it is a plot by globalist elite to take away the freedom of others. Some people say that the pandemic is being manipulated by big pharmaceutical companies to produce and sell drugs (Lynas, 2020). It must be noted that, wherever the Corona virus emerged, the world has suffered from it devastating and ravaging effects and it may take the world a couple of years to recover. Students are global citizens and critical agents of change in the world, nations and the communities they live in, therefore they must be assisted to learn, cultivate the habit of compassion and ensure safer and caring environment or atmosphere for learning so they can achieve their potentials. With this, governments, educational bodies or agencies, parents and all stakeholders should put necessary arrangements in place to promote the continuity of education.

UNICEF estimated that 134 countries had implemented national school closure due to COVID-19 pandemic. As of 28th April 2020, schools closure affected 1.3 billion learners in 186 countries thus 73.8% of the world's enrolled students and the shutting down of schools have widened learning inequalities and hurt vulnerable children and youth disproportionately (UNESCO, 2020). On 23rd March 2020, Cambridge International Examination release a statement announcing the cancellation of Cambridge IGCSE, OLevel, A Level, Diploma and Pre-University examination. The international Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) cancelled the examination for its Diploma and career related programmes candidates scheduled between April and May 2020, this reportedly affected more than 200,000 students worldwide. In



Africa, it is estimated that over 262.5 million children from pre tertiary and secondary schools are currently out of school because of COVID-19 schools closure, which translates to approximately 21.5% of the total population in Africa (Pan-African Policy Paper, 2020).

In Ghana and Nigeria, for instance, BECE and WASSCE exams that were scheduled between April and June 2020 have been postponed. Children from low-income backgrounds, those with disabilities, and Refugee children are hard hit by corona virus school closures as the pandemic has created inequality among these disadvantaged children, In Africa schools are not only a place for learning but safe space from violence and exploitation. It is also where they have nutritional meals (Pan-African Policy Paper, 2020). Schools closure impact not only office technology students, teachers and families but have far-reaching economic and societal consequences. The pandemic have exposed us on various social and economic issues including poor internet services, food insecurity, homelessness, poor healthcare, and disability services. Young girls are particularly vulnerable. School closure may lead to increase in teenage pregnancies and school dropouts. There was an increase in domestic violence, sexual abuse and rising number of adolescent pregnancies during Ebola outbreak (Rothe et. Al 2015). Girls and women were exposed to vulnerabilities in terms of sexual exploitation during the Ebola outbreak (UNDP, 2015).

Covid 19 and Remote Learning Ability Tertiary Students

A temporal shift of instructional delivery to an alternative delivery mode due to crisis circumstances (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020). Many stakeholders of education had earlier recommended online learning for Basic school children, however, the numerous challenges that come in the implementation of emergency remote learning have overawed most education systems worldwide. For many years, the use of mobile phones by students in the Senior High Schools in Ghana is prohibited. In villages and peri-urban areas some parents cannot afford the cost of a smartphone and internet data and even do not have the technical knowhow to assist their children to participate in online learning. Electricity is not available in most villages in Africa providing the devices and connectivity to students and teachers remains key to ensuring successful online learning in Africa.

The world has lost many lives including security personnel, health care professionals, and teachers and so on. Social distancing protocols

recommended by the WHO and GHS have affected all businesses. The situation has created emotional and psychological distress. Celebration of Festivals have been banned. Meanwhile, festivals seasons are periods where communities embark on developmental projects, raise funds to support local projects, make merry, and Fraternize. Lastly, the entertainment industry have been greatly affected. Musicians, songwriters, actors, night club and bar operators have had their businesses collapsing and many industry players losing their jobs. Ghana National Council of Private Schools (GNACOPS) have estimated that, over 94,000 private school teachers have lost their jobs due to the corona virus outbreak as at May 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic is first and foremost a health crisis. Many countries have (rightly) decided to close schools, colleges and universities. The crisis crystallises the dilemma policymakers are facing between closing schools (reducing contact and saving lives) and keeping them open (allowing workers to work and maintaining the economy). The severe short-term disruption is felt by many families around the world: home schooling is not only a massive shock to parents' productivity, but also to children's social life and learning. Teaching is moving online, on an untested and unprecedented scale. Student assessments are also moving online, with a lot of trial and error and uncertainty for everyone. Many assessments have simply been cancelled. Importantly, these interruptions will not just be a short-term issue, but can also have long-term consequences for the affected cohorts and are likely to increase inequality. Going to school is the best public policy tool available to raise skills. While school time can be fun and can raise social skills and social awareness, from an economic point of view the primary point of being in school is that it increases a child's ability. Even a relatively short time in school does this; even a relatively short period of missed school will have consequences for skill growth. But can we estimate how much the COVID-19 interruption will affect learning? Not very precisely, as we are in a new world; but we can use other studies to get an order of magnitude. Two pieces of evidence are useful. Carlsson et al. (2015) consider a situation in which young men in Sweden have differing number of days to prepare for important tests. These differences are conditionally random allowing the authors to estimate a causal effect of schooling on skills. The authors show that even just ten days of extra schooling significantly raises scores on tests of the use of knowledge ('crystallized intelligence') by 1% of a standard deviation. As an extremely rough measure of the impact of the current school closures, if we were to simply



extrapolate those numbers, twelve weeks less schooling (i.e. 60 school days) implies a loss of 6% of a standard deviation, which is non-trivial. They do not find a significant impact on problem-solving skills (an example of 'fluid intelligence').

A different way into this question comes from Lavy (2015), who estimates the impact on learning of differences in instructional time across countries. Perhaps surprisingly, there are very substantial differences between countries in hours of teaching. For example, Lavy shows that total weekly hours of instruction in mathematics, language and science is 55% higher in Denmark than in Austria. These differences matter, causing significant differences in test score outcomes: one more hour per week over the school year in the main subjects increases test scores by around 6% of a standard deviation. In our case, the loss of perhaps 3-4 hours per week teaching in maths for 12 weeks may be similar in magnitude to the loss of an hour per week for 30 weeks. So, rather bizarrely and surely coincidentally, we end up with an estimated loss of around 6% of a standard deviation again. Leaving the close similarity aside, these studies possibly suggest a likely effect no greater than 10% of a standard deviation but definitely above zero. Perhaps to the disappointment of some, children have not generally been sent home to play. The idea is that they continue their education at home, in the hope of not missing out too much. Families are central to education and are widely agreed to provide major inputs into a child's learning, as described by Bjorklund and Salvanes (2011). The current global-scale expansion in home schooling might at first thought be seen quite positively, as likely to be effective. But typically, this role is seen as a complement to the input from school. Parents supplement a child's maths learning by practising counting or highlighting simple maths problems in everyday life; or they illuminate history lessons with trips to important monuments or museums. Being the prime driver of learning, even in conjunction with online materials, is a different question; and while many parents round the world do successfully school their children at home, this seems unlikely to generalise over the whole population. So while global home schooling will surely produce some inspirational moments, some angry moments, some fun moments and some frustrated moments, it seems very unlikely that it will on average replace the learning lost from school. But the bigger point is this: there will likely be substantial disparities between families in the extent to which they can help their children learn. Key differences include (Oreopoulos et al. 2006) the amount of time available to devote to

teaching, the non-cognitive skills of the parents, resources (for example, not everyone will have the kit to access the best online material), and also the amount of knowledge – it's hard to help your child learn something that you may not understand yourself. Consequently, this episode will lead to an increase in the inequality of human capital growth for the affected cohorts. The closure of schools, colleges and universities not only interrupts the teaching for students around the world; the closure also coincides with a key assessment period and many exams have been postponed or cancelled.

Internal assessments are perhaps thought to be less important and many have been simply cancelled. But their point is to give information about the child's progress for families and teachers. The loss of this information delays the recognition of both high potential and learning difficulties and can have harmful long-term consequences for the child. Andersen and Nielsen (2019) look at the consequence of a major IT crash in the testing system in Denmark. As a result of this, some children could not take the test. The authors find that participating in the test increased the score in a reading test two years later by 9% of a standard deviation, with similar effects in mathematics. These effects are largest for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Importantly, the lockdown of institutions not only affects internal assessments. In the UK, for example, all exams for the main public qualifications – GCSEs and A levels – have been cancelled for the entire cohort. Depending on the duration of the lockdown, we will likely observe similar actions around the world. One potential alternative for the cancelled assessments is to use 'predicted grades', but Murphy and Wyness (2020) show that these are often inaccurate, and that among high achieving students, the predicted grades for those from disadvantaged backgrounds are lower than those from more advantaged backgrounds. Another solution is to replace blind exams with teacher assessments. Evidence from various settings show systematic deviations between unblind and blind examinations, where the direction of the bias typically depends on whether the child belongs to a group that usually performs well (Burgess and Greaves 2013, Rangvid 2015). For example, if girls usually perform better in a subject, an unblind evaluation of a boy's performance is likely to be downward biased. Because such assessments are used as a key qualification to enter higher education, the move to un-blind subjective assessments can have potential long-term consequences for the equality of opportunity.



It is also possible that some students' careers might benefit from the interruptions. For example, in Norway it has been decided that all 10th grade students will be awarded a high-school degree. And Maurin and McNally (2008) show that the 1968 abandoning of the normal examination procedures in France (following the student riots) led to positive long-term labour market consequences for the affected cohort. In higher education many universities and colleges are replacing traditional exams with online assessment tools. This is a new area for both teachers and students, and assessments will likely have larger measurement error than usual. Research shows that employers use educational credentials such as degree classifications and grade point averages to sort applicants (Piopiunik et al. 2020). The increase in the noise of the applicants' signals will therefore potentially reduce the matching efficiency for new graduates on the labour market, who might experience slower earnings growth and higher job separation rates. This is costly both to the individual and also to society as a whole (Fredriksson et al. 2018).

The careers of this year's university graduates may be severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. They have experienced major teaching interruptions in the final part of their studies, they are experiencing major interruptions in their assessments, and finally they are likely to graduate at the beginning of a major global recession. Evidence suggests that poor market conditions at labour market entry cause workers to accept lower paid jobs, and that this has permanent effects for the careers of some. Oreopoulos et al. (2012) show that graduates from programmes with high predicted earnings can compensate for their poor starting point through both within- and across-firm earnings gains, but graduates from other programmes have been found to experience permanent earnings losses from graduating in a recession

Theoretical Framework

The study is underpinned by the viral modernity theory by Michael A. Peters (2020). Viral modernity is a concept that is based on the role of information and forms of bioinformation in the social world. This theory discusses the impact of misinformation on infectious diseases and their consequential effects on education and socio-cultural activities of people (Peters, Jandri, & McLaren, 2020). It identifies some media professionals as messengers of inaccurate information on social media and described it as a ways of helping to fuel panic, hysteria and stigma that are associated with infectious diseases outbreak (Peters et al., 2020).

Summary of Reviewed Literature

The study review literature in line with novel literature available. The study anchored its theory on viral modernity theory by Michael A. Peters (2020). Most of the authors agree to the fact that Covid-19 impacted on the economies of the students. Others also saw points that emergency remote learning could have come prepared (Williams, 2020). Some other authors subscribed that Covid-19 outbreak caused learning gaps among students and that will take some recovery time. It was a majority opinion of the authors that Covid-19 handling approach should be inclusive (Williams, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The paper has been able to reach that Covid-19 obstructed learning and teaching activities in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Parents and students had a drop in their economic life to enable them buy data and other materials to cope with the new normal method of learning. The remote learning and teaching was entirely novel to the tertiary terrain in Rivers State. There were no initial training and change management approach prior to the emergency which gulped the entire world.

SUGGESTIONS

From the foregoing, the following have been suggested:

1. Management of tertiary institutions in Rivers State, should from time to time organize seminars and workshops on e-learning.
2. The e-learning process should be made part of the mainstream learning process by the management of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
3. Academic staff in tertiary institutions should engage in personal development and not necessarily waiting for management all the time.

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