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**Surmounting the Emerging Economic Implications of Social Distancing
for Effective Teaching and Learning in Nigeria**

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Abstract

Learning institutions are known for the prominent roles they play as agent of socialization. Just before the advent of the ravaging global scourge called coronavirus 19, education was the main connect of all other agents of socialization like family, religious institutions, peers and media. The aggregate macro-economic pressure on households, firms and governments have shifted a lot of responsibilities on education sector, such as child care, mentoring and boarding school facilities in Nigeria. Homeless children take solace in school community as their families. Perhaps, the greatest challenge posed by this menace to teaching and learning is the doctrine of social distancing and associated economic implications. How could social-distancing be applied to our education system without altering the known famous teaching and learning method? What is the cost implication for this sudden shift? What framework or platform was made to accommodate this change? How can governments in different levels intervene? What sustenance plans can we rely on? How effective is the emerging method of learning and teaching? Since the emerging of Lassa-fever in Nigeria and global epidemics like Ebola and Covid-19 have just introduced a turning point in our traditional four corner of the wall classroom perception of teaching and learning environment known traditionally as in-person school teaching method to virtual campus approach to learning. There is an urgent call for State of emergency to be declared on the state of teaching and learning as well as structural design of our school plants and staff training on the use of virtual technologies for effective teaching and learning in Nigeria.

1.0 Background of the Study

In recent times, there has been a paradigmatic shift from global demand chain of aviation, tourism and hospitality, restaurant and events management to research in health and health care projects due to the corona virus 19 pandemic.

This commonest mode of transmitting this viral infection, according to experts are droplets, handshaking, and social closeness among others.

Social distancing as a practice is completely alien to Nigeria and African culture as a whole, in fact, this disposition is invariance to our culture and social interactions.

In African culture, shaking of hands shows participants hold no weapon at hand or in the mind, hug or to embrace demonstrates intimacy and closeness among people while whispering predicts romance and privacy. Adversely the demand of social distancing includes two (2) meters apart, not hugging, no hand shake and no whispering. Since the above listed vehicles according to experts could make the spread of Covid-19 pandemic more rapid.

In Nigeria, after the four (4) weeks intensive lockdown with direct focus on Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Lagos and Osun States, the Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 review committee lamented the effect of the lockdown and closure of economic and academic institutions on households, private firms and the unemployed population of Nigerians and recommended palliative to poor Nigerian and relaxing of the lockdown to allow opening of some economic sectors and later allowed for opening of religious houses, markets and intra state travelling. Though the committee prohibited interstate transit, non-used of face mask and opening of schools, the monitoring of compliance could best be described as zero percent.

This probably results in the present skyrocketed positive case of the virus in Nigeria up to Twenty-two Thousand, Eight Hundred and sixty eight today as I am writing this paper.

But schools remain closed. The economic implications of workable social distancing in both public and private school is what informs its continuous closure. Which of the schools, in Nigeria have a campus plan that can accommodate students with learning gaps of two (2) meters apart? How do we cushion the impact of school closure on private school teachers as most private schools operators are no longer paying their workers? How feasible is the use of virtual technology for learning and teaching as demanded by social distancing policies, in terms of training, infrastructure and facilities? What is the government of the day doing to ensure that social distance policy is implemented for our children to be back to school if this health menace is not in a hurry to exit?

1.1 Conceptual Framework

Surmounting: This implies frantic and deliberate effort put in place in attempt to fight, stop, or control a piece of challenge that threatens personal or group safety. We have a frightening economic development currently posed by the need to be socially distant on our economy and method of teaching and learning.

Emerging Economic Implication: This phrase refers to all the new trend and challenges posed by the safety demand of the current global menace corona-virus (Covid-19). These chain of macro-economic give and take is already shaking the living standard of members of household, firms and government spending.

Social distancing: This is one of the newest concepts in our lexicon. It is an empirically approved measure to curtail the spread of Covid-19 that originated in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China beginning in December 2019. The World Health Organization has declared it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

Social distancing requires that there must be a significant space between people say two (2) meters apart. This is because according to the findings, the virus is said to

spread through droplets, shaking of hands, and bodily contact. The doctrine of social distancing if fully implemented must call for a complete restructure on our traditional teaching and learning method. Since a class of fifty (50) learners will need a space of 100 square meters to be in lines with the specification. A school campus of this nature can hardly be achieved in the present economic system. Knowing that each school enrolls up to Ten Thousand (10,000) students per school session in a conventional University in Nigeria.

Teaching and Learning: This is the process of transmitting and imbibing behavioural change or skills to individuals or group of individuals through dissemination and acquisition of knowledge and skills (as apprentice) which aim at solving a given human problems. Traditionally, teaching and learning are commonly identified with classroom interactive activities. These activities advocate all the measures and tasks that are antagonistic with social distancing such as closed proximity, whispering, role played and touching as common routine with this method called in-person (face to face) school teaching method.

1.2 Alternative Learning Opportunities

On the other hand, E-service learning method or online learning method which allows for the use of virtual technology seems to be corona-virus era compliance approach to teaching and learning. In this 21st century, learning have grown to a level where the teacher serves as a mentor or skill facilitator since all information a learner may need are at the disposal of all learners via online teaching facilities. The following platforms constitute the latest domain for online learning: google hangout meet, zoom, Microsoft teams, bigblue button and webinars.

Radio Instructional programme in Nigeria: In Nigeria students in private and public schools are participating in this programme for the last two months. This programme is an applaudable one in Nigeria. However, there is issues rises up against

the achievement of the set objectives of this radio program in Nigeria first is that only Eighteen (18) Percent of Nigerian household can access and own a transistor radio. Secondly, poor network facilities in Nigeria we have many remote communities that house the locals who could not access this programme and came to think of it, there is little or no formative or summative evaluation of the learners.

Hitherto, though radio is the cheapest method of information dissemination, its transitory flow of message within a short time without visual inputs that is necessary for effective learning especially among learning in the lower classes, is of enormous disadvantage. Maximum result can hardly be attainable via the use of radio.

In addition to the above, means of assisting learning at home during this corona virus era outstanding private school are currently embarking on online school programmes. Attempts to evaluate the students are made, but poor internet facilities and network problems still poses tremendous challenge on its success.

1.3 Economic Implication of Social Distancing on related social sectors.

i Private Schools in Nigeria

Since the private institution ranging from primary, secondary to Tertiary, Institutions do not have any financial subsidy from government and is being finance from the income derived from bills paid by students. The closure of schools in Nigeria due to the advents of Covid-19 had impacted quite negatively on the living standard of private schools teachers and the proprietors. There is a spillover effect on the households of these private schools employees and their dependents. This sector of education have long overdue for financial subsidy and grant from government and international financial bodies since they constitute a significant unit of the economy.

In the part of the students, juvenile delinquency, child pregnancy and early marriages have permeated the scene. Some parents have resorted to forcing the school

age to street hawking in order to meet the hardship posed to homes due to the present lockdown and low ebb economic flow. Currently there is high rate loss of jobs in many private business enterprises including schools. Hence were record significant negative impact on real economy sector.

ii Victim of COVID-19 in Nigeria

As at today, twenty five thousand person have been confirm with Covid-19 positive. Mostly male adult. The implication is that an average of twenty thousand household is existing without the supply of their daily bread. These individuals will have to face a lot of economic losses due to their quarantined conditions.

iii social events

In Nigeria, especially South -South and South East part of the country, public events like wedding, burial and child naming attract a lot of people, which is not allowed within the practice of the doctrine of social distancing. The implication here is that the economic benefits associated with these common lifestyle are denied. The above allowed exchange of gift and financial donation. The current business transaction restriction in attempt to curtail the ravaging effects of corona virus has hampered a lot of economic reward accompanied by the above mentioned activities.

1.4 Government Responses and Policies in Respect to Social Distancing for Effective Education

Nigerian economy is under the sustenance of a mono-economic product that is oil. Hence, the current instability in the price of crude oil spells doom for Nigerian economy. The nation's projecting revenue flow from oil had decline from 5.5 trillion Naira in 2020 to 1.1 trillion naira. Consequently, we are faced with an expected fiscal crisis which had brought to bear some inevitable economic challenges. These have chain effect on all sectors of the Nigerian economy and educational sector is at the integral part.

Unfortunately, the budget allocation to education had always been grossly inadequate, from time immemorial. This informs the incessant strikes in all levels of Nigerian education and the present deplorable state of our schools system.

Government of Nigeria have subscribed to a number of measure to curb and content the venom of corona virus this includes tax measures – direct and indirect tax payment, deferrals and rate reduction, extension of a moratorium and debt repayment as a way of economic stimulus measures. Creation of ₦50 billion target facility for affected households and small and medium enterprises.

Provision of additional ₦100 billion intervention fund in health care loans and the adoption of ₦360 to a dollar as official rate and reduction in price of PMS to ₦121.50 per liter.

Come to look at it, even with the deplorable state of campuses across the nation and the imposition of shift in outreaching and learning course in Nigeria, there is no intervention fund toward educational sector. This makes it difficult to think that with the ravaging nature of this global menace and the present state of government involvement, effective implementation of social distancing policy is still mirage and learning and teaching in Covid-19 era, Nigeria can hardly be effective.

1.5 Integral Demand of Social Distancing in Nigerian Schools

According to Ministry of Education, the required number of student per classroom seating is between thirty (30) and thirty-five (35). This regulation had long been alter due to overcrowd population of students in most government own schools amidst constantly depreciated facilities. In our Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities most interdisciplinary lectures (General Courses) host more than two hundred (200) students at a time. Reasons like, inadequate facilities and manpower usually colour the need to tolerate the above reality.

Now in this era where social distancing is in high demand upon schools and other public institutions. Class size refers to an educational tool that can be in a school (Adeyemi, 2008). There are large and small sizes in school. The smaller the class, the greater the likelihood is that a teacher will spend more time with individual students.

Ajayi and Adeosun (2004) opined that in order to control rising capital cost of education, the average class size could be increased. The argument also is supported by Toth and Montagan (2002) who reported that the increase in enrolment in many institutions which has become major concerns of student could definitely lead to an increase in the class size.

Commeyras (2000) however, disagreed with these arguments and reported that effective teaching seems impracticable for teacher educators having large class size of 50, 75, 100, or more in Nigeria. Okoro (1985) reported that the class size in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka should range between 35 or 40 students. He argued that few students per class size are uneconomical, as they do not make full use of space, teacher and teaching materials. Nwadiani (2000) argued that the higher the class size, the lower the cost of education. He contended however, that most classrooms are overcrowded spreading resources thinly and thereby affecting the quality of education.

The basic classroom should have at least 72 square feet (6.70 square meters) of windows for natural light. These classrooms should view out looking life and an exit door to the outside learning environment (Tanner, 2000).

Abramson (1991) found higher achievement in the schools with adequate space and further noted that if those larger space were used for instructional purposes the achievement was even greater. Students need ample space for academic exercise and interaction.

The effects of high density were summarized by Wohlwill and Van Vliet (1985):

“It appears as though the consequence of high density conditions that involve either too many children or too

little space are: Excess levels of simulation; stress and arousal; a drain on resources available; considerable interference; reduction in desired privacy levels, and loss of control (pp. 108 – 109).”

As it stands today in Nigeria the body language of the people and that of government show that corona virus pandemic has come to live with us. This is demonstrated as the federal committee for Covid-19 has just announced the relax of inter-state restriction amidst the increase number of Covid-19 cases.

It is therefore behoove on the government and other stakeholders in education to re-strategize and fund the new repositioning of our learning culture and method.

Tips Demanded by School for Social Distancing

According to medical experts, the virus that causes Covid-19 is commonly transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes or speaks. The droplets are believed to be heavy to hang in the air, finally these droplets fall on the ground or any platform/surfaces.

As such caution should be taken by schools, colleges and daycare setting in following steps on social distancing such as hand washing, nose mask covering, use of hand sanitizer and other personal hygiene as well as cleaning of possible contaminated surfaces.

Moreso, it is a necessity for schools to remain open, class sizes must be in line with the number of students available and keep as small as possible. Launch times and the time for breaks as well as movement of students around the school must be regulated to reduce clustering among the student. Parents and guardians who come to pick their children/wards should also be discouraged from gathering at the school gate. As much as possible, people should be discouraged from touching their faces. Moreso, the use of tissues or elbow to cough or sneeze should be made mandatory as well as directing such waste to waste bins. Hand washing apparatus and materials should be made available. Hand sanitizers should be made available in all the classes and the administrative units.

The total number of times the surface of school desk, doors handles, toilet blocks, and other facilities in the school are cleaned should be increased. As much as possible, students, staff and other visitor in the school should be space apart at all times. To achieve this, sitting student at desk must be far apart. Where school feeding is practices, cautions must be taken for everyone to queue further apart at least a meter between two people. The use of nose mask should be encourage by all. Basically, owing to the available inadequate classroom blocks in our school there should be a morning and afternoon session of school per institutions. All parents in the school should be taught while they must observe social distancing and must be encourage to do so as possible as practicable. Teachers should discourage students from sharing their personal belongings with other students.

1.6 Conclusion

The implications of social distancing on effective education is enormous and should not be left decaying. Although social distancing practice is alien to African cultural practice, since it is a safety measure to prevent the spread of this global epidemic called corona virus. This is urgent need for cultural adjustment in the Nigerian education sector with the target objective of achieving effective teaching and learning.

The new trend of teaching and learning has permeated the global space with the arrival of the life threatening epidemic called Covid-19. This trend is gradually making pre-corona virus teaching method obsolete. The imposition of E-service learning – or virtual campus method.

Efforts should be made by all stakeholder to adapt to the new trend to education even if there will be a post Covid-19 era. This will make education highly effective even though that may take a reasonable period on journey considering the nature of Nigeria pace of development in infrastructure and social amenity.

1.7 Recommendations

- i. Training and retraining of teachers in e-service learning method should be introduced to suit with the present health challenge is inevitable.
- ii. All care givers teacher should own a PC.
- iii. Computer programmers should upgrade the present virtual technology for more easy operation.
- iv. Government should embark on larger classroom sizes projects.
- v. Government should make access to internet free to all.
- vi. The school sick bay should be expanded and equip with train personnel.
- vii. Webinars facilities should be install in all institutions of learning.
- viii. The easing restriction should not alter all dependable virtual learning facilities as the world is fast becoming digitalized.
- ix. Education as the main driver of development should not be neglected due to the present economic travail to avoid future economic implication.
- x. Government should earmark a special intervention fund to boost education sector in the face of this pandemic.
- xi. International grant and educational intervention supports to Nigeria should be directed to revamp educational infrastructure and facilities.

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