RETROSPECTIVE REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this paper is to examine the impact of the COVID-19 virus on the educational system in Nigeria. It is without a doubt the Coronavirus pandemic has adversely affected all sectors of any operational economy worldwide. In Nigeria, the educational system has been devastated and children from all level of classes (high class, middle class, and low class) are bearing the brunt of it. This study offers critical reviews on issues relating to the impact of corona virus on education in Nigeria using qualitative research method and also adopted methods to mitigate the impact on architectural education, so as to manage and mitigate the ugliness of the situation. The paper further explored admixture of literature excursion laced with qualitative dimension to research, by deeply conducting a sojourn into quite a number of existing releases from verifiable databases on the issues of covid19 in Nigeria, with a view to gauging the extent of the relevance of the information to architectural education. The study ended by concluding that, it is highly important that we provide an equitable and inclusive learning environment for the students to ensure continuity in learning for all, irrespective of their socio-economic background. It is thus being suggested among other things, that there is every need for intervention of public-private partnership with non-profits and other governmental agencies, so as to help effectively in advancing the elegance of available platforms, as well as to evolve new ones, that are infilled with requisite strength that is commensurate with public health realities of this era, so as to sufficiently be on top of any pandemic, the resultant effect of which stands to buoy architectural curricula in a way to make them unaffected in the face of such adversity, now or in the future.

KEYWORDS: *Covid-19, Architectural Education, Impact, Pandemic, Public-Private Partnership*

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND RATIONALE

Coronavirus is defined as a communicable respiratory disease (Dubai Medical Journal). Fu D et al (2020) opined coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause a range of illnesses from common cold all the way up to more severe diseases such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which are known to cause severe respiratory and intestinal illnesses. The corona virus also known as COVID19 emerged in Wuhan city (China) around the month of November, according to media reports on unpublished Chinese government data. This deadly virus caused the

world to be on high alert as the death toll and the number of confirmed cases is continuously rising since the first case was reported. This has led to indefinite global shutdown of the economy, especially the educational sector which has slightly affected the educational calendar.

It has forced many institutions and businesses of all sort to temporarily shut down and governments across the world to place a restriction on movement while exempting providers of essential services who are to strictly observe social distancing rules while providing services as a way to contain the spread of the virus. Unfortunately, the educational sector is a part of the receiving end. According to UNESCO, an estimated 1.725 billion learners have been affected as a result of school closures, representing about 99.9% of the world's student population as of April 13th, 2020. It has made many organizations and institutions adopt the idea of embracing technology to disseminate information across to peer groups.

The World Health Organization has warned that COVID-19 infection rates are likely to remain for a long time. Therefore, there is a need for countries to plan one step ahead of the epidemic curve, Nigeria is no exception. According to Doyin Ogunyemi (2020) Nigeria is amongst the countries with the highest number of cases, while the numbers remain low compared with many other countries in the world, it continues to rise gradually. Worryingly, the mortality rate stands at 3.1%. This is higher than some of its neighbours. For example, Ghana, which has a similar age demography and socioeconomic characteristics, is reporting a mortality rate of 0.5%.
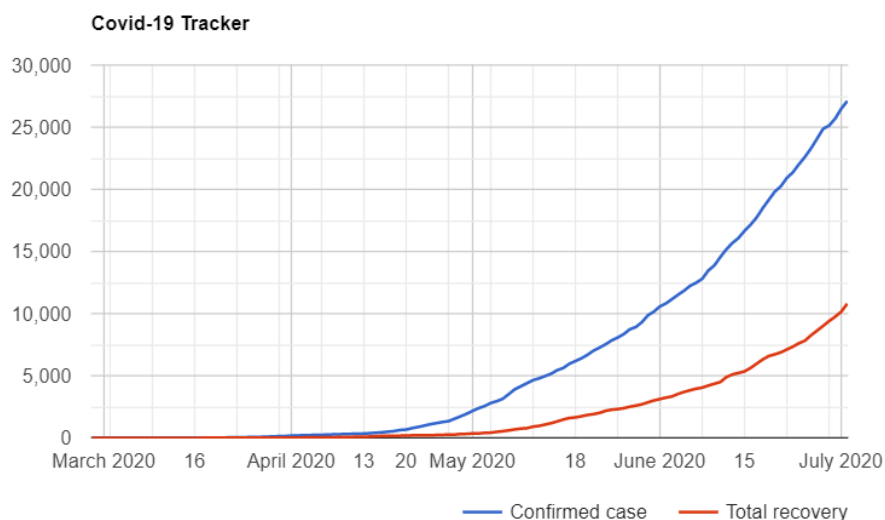
Plate 1: Chart showing the corona virus updated cases and total recoveries statistics in Nigeria.
Source: Nairametrics, 2020.
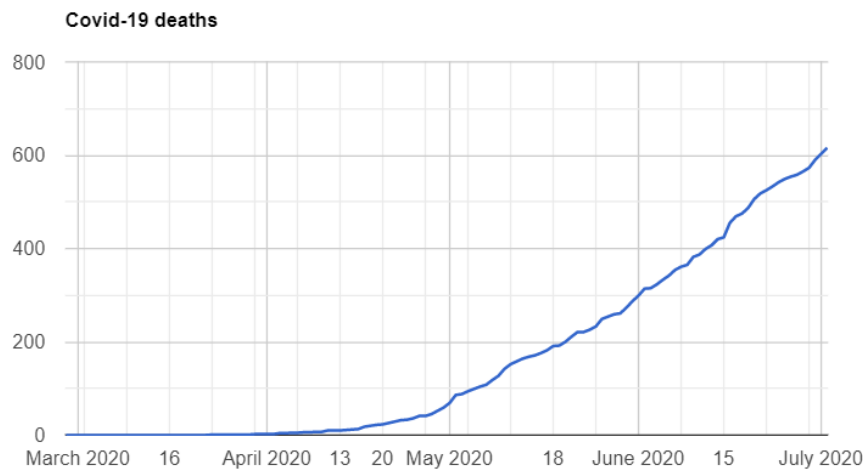
Plate 2: Chart showing the corona virus death statistics in Nigeria.
Source: Nairametrics, 2020.
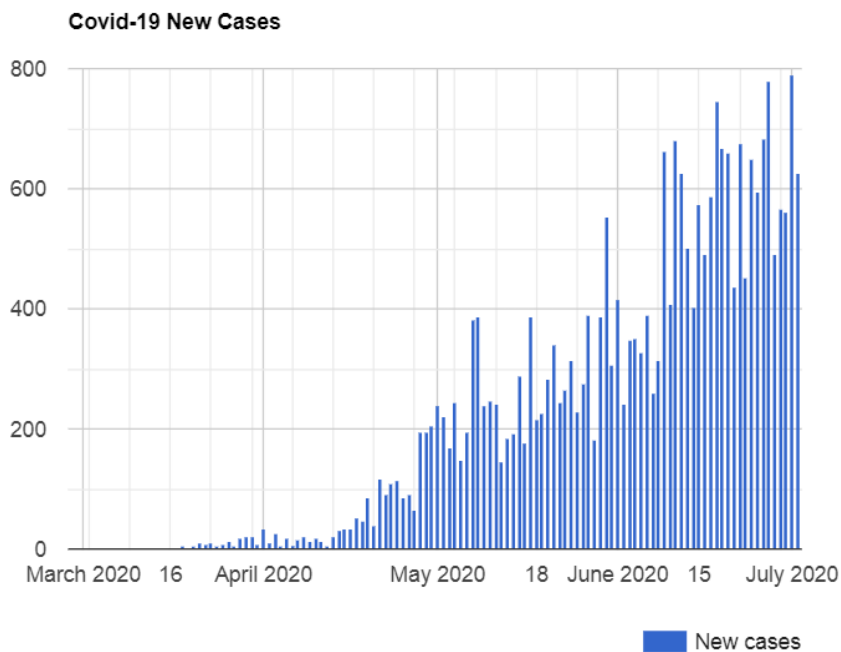
Plate 3: Chart showing the corona virus new occurrences statistics in Nigeria.
Source: Nairametrics, 2020.

The Architectural education is more of practical field where illustrations and rigorous studio activities and assessment takes place. The field requires the interaction of the tutor and students even the relationship amongst themselves to tackle architectural related issues. The design studio and its associated pedagogy has been widely adopted in the UK as the primary means of educating architects (Vowles et al., 2012). Its physical context has been recognized as an integral component to the profession's 'signature pedagogy' in which future architects embed cognitive and performative professional skills (Shulman, 2005).

To cushion the effects of the pandemic on architectural education, according to Ladipo and Adebori (2020) the world is embracing technological innovations. Virtual interactions are increasingly adopted to replace face-to-face engagements and limit the total disruption to many sectors. UNESCO has recommended the use of distance learning programmes, open educational applications, and platforms by schools and teachers to reach learners remotely. These could include integrated digital learning platforms, video lessons, Massive Open Online Courses and broadcast through radio and television. The success of these recommendations hinges on the use of high-technology or low-technology solutions, which are based on the reliability of local power supply, internet connectivity and digital skills of teachers, students, parents, and caretakers.

As pleasant as this solution is, it is said that students from under-served low-income communities will be left out and unable to access learning during this period. In Nigeria, many states have embarked on airing school lessons on radio and television and this is highly commendable.

Ladipo and Adebori (2020) further opined that Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) like Teach for Nigeria, are partnering with government agencies to facilitate implementation and adoption. For example, in Ogun state, Teach For Nigeria is working with the government to deliver classes on TV and have deployed online capacity building workshops for teachers on programming using Scratch (a block-based visual programming language and website targeted primarily at children). This is in a bid to develop skills for STEM education. However, inadequate resources for deployment to under-served communities remain a challenge.

2.0   LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Amorighoye (2020), On 19[th]March 2020 the Federal Ministry of Education approved school closures as a response to the pandemic. States in the federation contextualized this, with the Lagos State Ministry of Education releasing a schedule of radio and TV lessons for students in public schools. The public is becoming increasingly aware of the dangers the corona virus poses. Increase in number of COVID-19 cases and extension of lockdown days has now pointed to the fact that schools are not physically resuming anytime soon.

According to an article from Sustainable Education & Enterprise Development (S.E.E.D,2020) on 22ndApril 2020, the Hon. Commissioner for Education in Lagos State, Mrs. Folasade Adefisayo, issued a press statement that third term remains postponed, however private schools can continue remote teaching so that students continue to learn. We are not against online/remote learning, but what about the vulnerable children amongst us that attend low-cost private schools (often regarded as "private schools for the poor") that are not government funded.

SEED further stated that Low-cost private schools in Lagos State accounts for over 60% (about 12,000) of the schools and educate millions of children from very poor communities. These schools typically survive from ''hand to mouth'' as they depend on the meager fees, they receive from poor parents mostly on daily, weekly, or monthly basis. Many of these schools were already facing other challenges prior to this crisis. For instance, most of the schools in Education District 5 (Badagry axis) had been adversely affected by the Benin border closures. Many of their parent's incomes, which are mostly tied to border activities had been negatively impacted.

As stated by the World Poverty Clock in a written article from Ladipo and Adebori (2020), the nation currently has about 50% of her population living in poverty, with many of the citizens struggling to afford three square meals, especially at this time, despite the palliative measures by the government. This means that there are a lot of students who do not have access to either radio or television, coupled with the issue of erratic power supply. Such students also have no internet access nor educational technological resources, a situation that is creating a gap in their academic progress for as long as this pandemic persists.

Obviously, COVD-19 is magnifying the educational inequity in Nigeria as only those with access to digital learning resources will keep learning in the comfort of their homes while those without access (the majority) are left behind. Ladipo and Adebori (2020) further stated that this learning crisis is widening the social gaps instead of narrowing them. Architectural Students are now being disadvantaged by the pandemic. In the future, this gap will show up as weak skills in the workforce, thereby making it less likely for this category of young people to get well paid and satisfying jobs. When this happens, these young people will become nuisances in the society, championing courses that aren't noble just to make ends meet. This reminds me of a saying by late Chief Obafemi Awolowo (a Nigerian nationalist and statesman) which goes thus:

*"The children of the poor you failed to train will never let your children have peace"*

The goal of Nigeria Education in Emergency working Group remains preparedness and response plan;

(1) reduce morbidity and mortality due to COVID-19 among school learners, teachers and school's stakeholder in North East Nigeria;
(2) mitigate the school closure negative impact on children learning and teacher wellbeing; and
(3) ensure effective, inclusive and safe return to quality learning for learners, and teachers.

Given the suddenness of this crisis and its impact to the Education system, it clearly appears that response is a matter of urgency. As stated in an article from Nigeria Education in Emergencies Working Group (2020) the response should start with school administration, from (FME, UBEC, SUBEB, Head teachers) Federal level to LGA level. Priority of LGAs will be determined on accessibility basis.

Humanitarian development and government partners in Nigeria are already experiencing some challenges in the implementation of response to COVID19. Such challenges ranges from funding requirements, protection of staff and capacity to deliver 100% while working from home. Despite these significant challenges, humanitarian and development organizations and Governments are implementing a range of interventions.

178
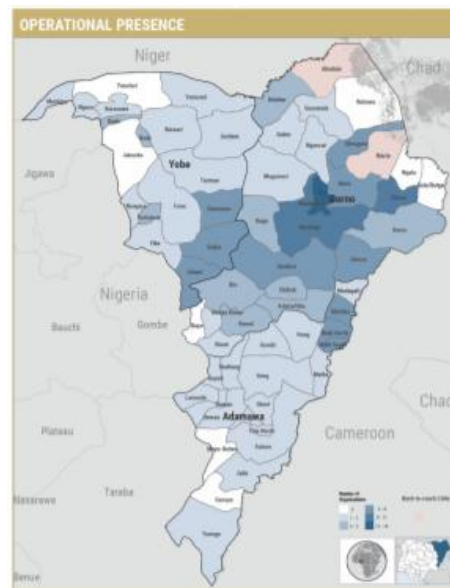
Plates 4&5: showing the response objectives and the operational presence in the north eastern side of Nigeria.
Source: Nigeria Education in Emergencies Working Group, 2020.
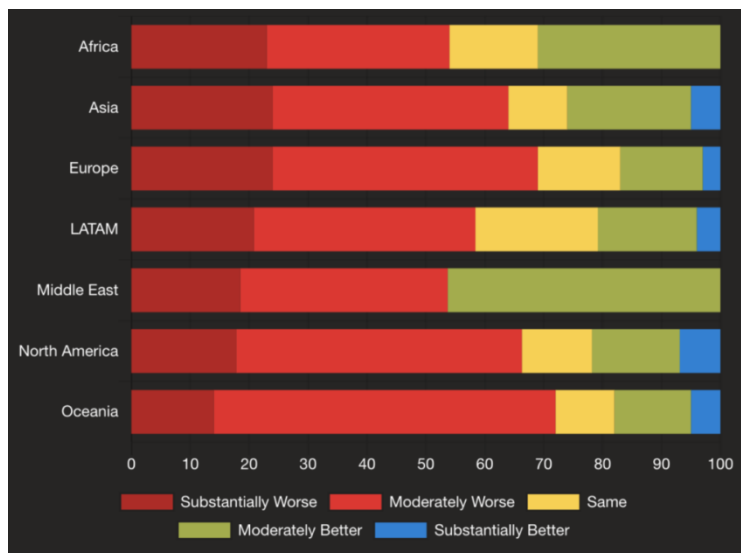
Plate 6: showing the expected impacts of COVID-19 across education sectors globally.
Source: Nigeria Education in Emergencies Working Group, 2020.

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Amorighoye opined that Government aid is needed in terms of investing in educational tools of the future alongside a total revamp of the educational sector. Reforms in the national curriculum post-pandemic would be an effective way to bridge the gap in inequality. Priorities should include the introduction of courses such as coding and robotics which can usher students into the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and prepare them for jobs of the future.

Amorighoye further stated that in countries such as Nigeria, education should be viewed as a high government priority. Help in increasing awareness of the pressing need for the country's children to be educated, especially those from low-income families, will benefit the country's economy in years to come. Aid provided in this direction can be viewed as an investment in human capital; the more educated a country is, the more productive. Of all sustainable missions surely the most pressing is to improve lives, and there's no better way to do so than proper and sound education for all.

3.0   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1   CONCLUSION

Now is the time to bridge the gap of educational inequity by ensuring adequate funding of the education sector. The effect of the pandemic is just one out of many implications of educational inequity, we don't know what awaits us in the future, so it is highly important that we provide an equitable and inclusive learning environment for the students to ensure continuity in learning for all, irrespective of their socio-economic background.

Let us remember that whatever the problem is, knowledge is power, education remains the solution. The future is in our hands to decide, let us join hands together to make the world a better place through quality and inclusive education.

3.2   RECOMMENDATIONS

The adoption of palliative measures which involves a public-private partnership with non-profits and other government agencies who are working to salvage the situation, such efforts can be supported through the provision of funds at this critical time. We should not forget that education is the bedrock of every society as education is the solution to whatever problem we might have.

Another essential element of the response in strategy will be working with communities to ensure access to learning remotely, while the education sector works to harmonize the Education in Emergencies Working Group (EiE) response during this crisis at the national and state level, interventions must also be contextualized to match local capacities available means to choose option. Communities will be engaged to identify needs and determine the most appropriate option. All Nigeria Education in Emergencies Working Group (EiEWG) members should consider this type of engagement as an essential element of their accountability to affected populations measures.

It is also strategic that portable solar radios be provided to each family especially in remote places. This will ensure continuity in learning for the majority of learners who are unable to access digital learning resources during this period. Also, teachers need to be trained on how best to deliver radio lessons such training can be done using virtual

platforms. Sincere appreciation goes to the teachers working assiduously in delivering lessons on radio despite the short notice and lack of training for such context because teaching in a conventional four-walled classroom is quite different from teaching on radio and so it is important to know how best to carry it out so as to achieve best results.

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