

REFORMATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN PANDEMIC ERA

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Abstract

This paper examines the need to reform and sustain the core functions of teachers and learners in teaching and learning, especially during the pandemic era. The chalk talk method which is a formal method of teaching with a blackboard and the teacher's voice as its focal point, is a method used across the whole world but gradually giving way to virtual learning, a new normal caused by the upsurge of the pandemic. Upon this background, this paper sees it as being imperative for teachers at various levels of teaching to be properly trained in the modern technology and also to inculcate the virtual learning into the teaching and learning curriculum right from Primary to the tertiary levels of education in Nigeria so as to sustain the country to be amongst the comity of progressive nations.

Keywords: Reformation, Sustainability, pandemic, chalk-talk, Teacher Education Programme.

Introduction

Coronavirus disease (COVID 19) pandemic has caused untold hardship to the entire populace in different sector of the economy is an understatement; this is because almost everyone on the planet earth is affected in one way or the other by the pandemic. In fact, those in the educational sector seem to be the mostly affected as schools were closed down to avert monumental loss amongst pupils and students. Little children, teenagers, adolescents and adult learners were sent home. This now became great burden for parents and guardians to shoulder.

No one seems to have experienced or witness such a pandemic but few have previously experienced a pandemic of this scale. There was total lock down in Nigeria in 2020 except for few people on essential services. UNESCO states that from the beginning of the pandemic they monitored the evolution of school closures around the world and also produced interactive maps from February 2020 to June 2022. In Nigeria on 19th March, 2020, the Federal Ministry of education announced the closure of all tertiary, secondary and primary schools nationwide. People were strictly restricted to their homes, only those on essential services were allowed to go to work. Likewise stores selling food items and pharmacies were allowed to open considering the fact that people still must eat and take their medication not minding the situation on ground. Everything then appeared so strange as most people have never experienced nor witness an occurrence of such nature in their lifetime. Schools and places of learning were not in any way considered for opening at all, and so for months schools were closed down and teaching and learning were at a standstill.

It is high time teacher education passed through some reformation to avert been jeopardized for it to be able to sustain teaching and learning during any pandemic period more importantly now that the whole world is still battling with the second wave of the COVID known as DELTA VARIANT. The Covid-19 pandemic that occurred in 2020 is an eye-opener that teachers have to be proactively equipped in their pedagogy to take care of whatever phenomenon that may occur in order not to get education stuck at any point in time. Education according to Ogundipe (2021) has always been seen as a veritable tool for societal transformation which explains the already established positive relationship between Education and Development. As such there should never be a time whereby a vacuum would be created that would not enable knowledge,

ideas, skills or information be transmitted to especially teenagers and youths for sustainability as a result of any pandemic. To this effect, teachers have to be trained and retrained in the modern technologies so as to bring the country Nigeria into lime light amongst the comity of progressive nations of the world.

Statement of the Problem

The Covid-19 pandemic, which ravaged Nigeria in 2020 exposed critical weakness in the nation's education system, especially the dependent on obsolete pedagogies, poor teacher preparedness or remote instruction, and stark inequalities in access to technology and digital learning resources. As schools urgently switched to distance learning, many educators lacked the knowledge, skill and tools required for effective online delivery, while innumerable learners especially those resident in rural and low-income communities were could not take part because of inadequate connectivity and limited access to devices. These unequal opportunities did not only disrupted learning continuity during the pandemic but it also undermine the urgent need for sustainable , resilient, and technology-integrated education model which capable of supporting equitable and uninterrupted learning in both ordinary and emergency contexts or situations. whole count What

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to reform the teacher education programmes for the sustainability of teaching and learning in pandemic era. Specifically the research tends to:

1. to identify appropriate reforms and propose adequate solutions for strengthening teacher pedagogy to sustain teaching and learning during pandemic or any of such similar situations or conditions.
2. to examine how other countries have coped with similar educational disruptions and the lessons their experiences hold for the country Nigeria.

Definition of terms

With the incidence of the Covid-19 which occurred in 2020 and prevented teachers and learners from going to school, there is henceforth the dire need to reform many aspects of the teacher education programmes in the areas of teaching pedagogy in order to conform with any pandemic era.

1. Reformation: Hornby (2015) defines reformation as the act of improving or changing something or somebody. This definition is therefore appropriate to this research work as it is a pointer to the fact that teacher education programmes should be improved upon to bring about changes that will be efficient and effective in the teaching and learning that will be taking place in pandemic era.
2. Sustainability: According to Ogundipe (2021) is the ability to maintain, provide for or nourish something for an indefinite period without damaging or depleting it. Whatever teacher education programme that needs to be reformed has to be the type that will cater for teaching and learning beyond a pandemic era.
3. Pandemic: is a disease that spreads over a whole country or the whole world (Hornby, 2015). Cambridge Dictionary, (2021) has a similar definition of a disease existing in almost all of an area or in almost all of a group of people, animals or plants. An example of this was the upsurge of Covid-19 which prevented the teaching and learning in schools almost throughout the whole of the year 2020.
4. Chalk talk: This is a traditional method of teaching that is face to face with the teacher and learners which has been in existence since the inception of Western education (Merriam Webster Dictionary 2021).
5. Teacher education programmes according to Oyekan (2006) are the organized curriculum contents which provide professional education and specialized training for pre-service and in-service teachers in order to educate the members of the society. In Nigerian education system, the programmes are classified into three levels on the basis of their training, acquisition and certification. These are:
 6. Nigeria Certificate Education (NCE) programme;
 7. Bachelor's Degree in Education programme and
 8. Post-Graduate Degree in Education Programme.

These teachers' education programmes will therefore need to be reformed or restructured to equip the personnel for the effective performance of their duties for sustainability especially in pandemic era. Nigeria has to wake up from its doldrums of yesteryears and move forward alongside other comity of developed nations.

Discussion

The traditional method employed for teaching which is the face-to-face teaching and learning method is gradually becoming obsolete or better still is that the traditional method is not suitable during this Covid-19 pandemic which found its way into our country Nigeria last year (2020) without any prior notice. This pandemic almost crippled the education of children in the Kindergarten to even those in the tertiary institutions. Seeing that the pandemic came in unexpectedly as such there were no immediate rescue to the stay at home sanctions that suddenly became the lot of almost everybody in educational sectors and those of others.

There was therefore the urgent need to exchange the normal traditional method employed for teaching and learning for a new normal of virtual teaching and learning. This is because the Covid-19 disease is a respiratory illness which requires people keeping away at a distance from one another which is quite at variance with the normal traditional method of teaching and learning.

This issue of pandemic makes it mandatory for teachers at all levels to continue to acquire knowledge which will make them relevant and suitable to remain on the job. It is important for teachers and would be teachers to know that teaching and learning as well as learners assessments are being done virtually which is quite different from what used to be the practice before the pandemic. In fact teaching and learning and even assessing have become easy as both the teachers and learners can sit or be in the confines of their homes to teach, learn and be evaluated as the case may be. Fehintola (2020) corroborates the aforementioned as she opines that virtual education facilitates learning and not mere learning that is forced at a particular time which means that with virtual, learners can decide when it is the most suitable time to learn with adequate arrangement put in place with the teachers concerned.

Teachers must therefore appreciate the need to acquire current digital pedagogical skills. The second wave of pandemic known as Delta Variant is very much on course ravaging the entire universe. It is therefore necessary for teachers to acquire and master the skills to use for teaching in case of an unexpected lock down so that our country Nigeria too can move forward instead of allowing our educational system to be at a standstill.

Therefore the need for reformation of teacher education programme for the sustainability of teaching and learning in pandemic era requires that the teacher education curriculum be looked into for necessary and require inclusion online and digital learning and other forms or types of

learning that will help to sustain teaching learning in case of a future reoccurrence of the pandemic. This is because when the first wave of Covid-19 started last year no one thought of a second wave known as Delta Variant so we are being hopeful that a third wave will not later rear its ugly head again. It has now become clear to all that with the pandemic the known traditional method of teaching and learning which is the conventional mode whereby the teacher is physically present with the learner may no longer be the usual practice with the normal. Covid-19 experience is a pointer to the fact that the digital pedagogical responses embraced by the different countries is meant to ensure continuity of teaching and learning during and in case of any pandemic (Illinois State Board of Education 2020).

Way forward

In the cause of moving forward amidst the covid-19 pandemic, many countries of the world sought after solutions to teaching and learning for their children. For instance, Lalani and Li (2020) write extensively that as a result, education has changed dramatically with the distinctive rise of e-learning, whereby teaching is undertaken remotely and on digital platforms. Not only this, but that research suggests that online learning has been shown to increase retention of information and take less time, meaning the changes coronavirus have caused might be here to stay. According to Henley (2020), Denmark was the first European country to reopen its primary schools and nurseries on April 15, 2020, allowing children up to age 11 to return. Meanwhile, as reported by the BBC (2020), South Korea initiated a nationwide online instruction program for its students after delaying the school year. Aside this, different online form of teaching as, Language apps, virtual tutoring, video conferencing tools or online learning software which have seen a significant surge in usage since Covid-19. Nevertheless, this has been possible because of the magnanimity of some educational technology and online tutoring firm that offers free access to their services (Lalani and Li, 2020)

If Nigeria will therefore not be left behind in the doldrums of yesteryears, all its teacher education programmes have to be reformed and overhauled in terms of modern technologies as being imbibed by other countries. Jumare (2020) has succinctly puts it that education reforms become inevitable since it is a continuous activity and because of the dynamic nature of man and the society he lives. Hence, the reason why the use of modern technologies have to be part

of the curriculum that have to be inculcated in all of the teacher education programmes not only theoretically but practically to sustain teaching and learning

As such, all modalities have to be put in place by all stakeholders of the educational system to allow these modern technologies be workable and functional as they have been effective in some other countries especially during pandemic era. However, Lalani and Li (2020) point out the challenges to overcome since some students are without reliable internet access and/or technology struggle to participate in digital learning. This gap is seen across countries and between income brackets within countries. According to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020) 95% of students in Switzerland, Norway and Austria have a computer to use for their school work, only 34% in Indonesia do.

Back home here in Nigeria, especially in Lagos State, Nwosu-Igbo (2021) explains that, there are challenges associated with online learning where millions still have no access to the internet and some have to drop out of classes because their parents couldn't afford internet data, while others have had to stop because they did not have the right phones and some do not even have any phone at all. To surmount these challenges, Amorighoye (2020) suggest measures that must be taken to help bridge the division which centre largely on Public- Private Partnerships (PPPs) and government aid. According to him, these PPPs can do much to improve the quality of and increase access to education for poor children in underserved communities. After all, in other developed countries too, help have been sought after their challenges. Therefore, it is only when all hands are on deck that the reformation desired in the teacher education programmes can be achieved for the sustainability of teaching and learning in pandemic era by all stakeholders.

Conclusion

For teacher education programme to be efficient and effective for teaching and learning in pandemic era, the curriculum for teacher education programme must be updated, all the stakeholders have to be proactive in whatever reformation in terms of modern technologies put in place and making sure that, they are adequately implemented to achieve the sustainability very much desired.

Suggestions

- i. Teachers at various levels of their programmes should be properly trained in the modern technologies.
- ii. Inculcating virtual learning into the teacher and learning curricular right from the primary to the tertiary levels of education is very germane in Nigeria at this present dispensation.
- iii. Government of all tiers has to look into the challenges faced by indigent learners and proffer solutions to their inability to have access to these modern technologies.
- iv. Measures should be taken by the government to monitor the implementation of any education programme put in place for efficiency and effectiveness.
- v. Funds to provide the necessary technology and facilities such as electricity which is very germane should be made available by the government and other stakeholders in all teacher education programmes so that reformation can be meaningful.
- vi. Also is the need for teacher to continue to improve them by engaging in further studies, workshops and conferences to enrich their knowledge so as to be at par with their contemporaries in the world over.
- vii. The Policy statement that 26% of the overall national budget as specified by UNESCO must be strictly adhered to.

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