

A Reflective approach to Pandemic and Academic Activities in Nigeria

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Abstract: Pandemic is an enormous challenge to education systems worldwide, and this viewpoint suggests to practitioners and policymakers a need for pragmatic approach to cope with various crisis that may be affecting academic activities in the world, and particularly in Nigeria. Moreover, a reflective view of this development is necessary to provoke adaptation and adjustment as a result of this new ecosystem of practice. In addition, reflective practice is an ongoing process that practitioners in every profession should adopt in order to build resilience to overcome challenging circumstances in such practices. Therefore, this is a pragmatic discourse of;

1. Adaptation to the new realities
2. Pragmatic Pedagogy

Keywords: Pragmatism, Academic, Pandemic, Pedagogy, Reflection, Adaptation, Ecosystem

I. INTRODUCTION

The twenty first century has seen an incredible growth worldwide in the provision of education at all levels. Nevertheless, Nigeria education systems have faced its greatest challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were ordered to switch from face-to-face instructions to an Emergency Remote Education. This practice is unprecedented in many countries of the world Nigeria inclusive, and it is different from the usual online teaching, e-learning, m-learning or planned practices such as distance learning in education. Therefore, it is obvious that education system in Nigeria was not designed in a way to prepare for emergency times and situations like the COVID-19 pandemic. This gap was eventually exposed when there was total close down of schools, and face-to-face instructions to settle for online lessons, radio and television.

The unexpected switch consequent upon the discovery of novel corona virus pandemic appears to be traumatic for nearly every instructor and even students who have now become used to face-to-face instructions. Moreover, parents and other parties that are involved in educational processes were overburdened because of these changes that necessitated alternative methods for monitoring educational progress as a result of reliance on online solutions. Pandemic and migration to a new normal in instructional delivery was not without its challenges of improvised online solutions and emergency online methods despite the global usage and popularity of online learning in education (Hodges, Moores, Lockee, Trust and Bond, 2020).

Emergency Remote Education was a new development and norms in most schools in Nigeria to upload

PowerPoint slides or even full papers into Learning Management Systems LMS such as; Moodle, Edmodo, Google Classrooms Google meet, WebEx and many more. In addition, others recorded lectures and then asked students to watch video, or listen to audio of those lectures asynchronously, while sometimes instructions were delivered synchronously for learners to attend from the comfort of their rooms. In most cases, it was generally observed that social media and instant communication tools such as Telegram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram were used to create communication channels among students, teachers, parents and the school. However, these kind of instructional methods may be the only alternative during the pandemic, but content and mode of delivery such that it promotes active learning and interest of learners will determine its efficiency (Bates and Galloway, 2012).

Furthermore, in time of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, regular internet connection can be a problem for low-income household while many may not have access to computer devices and necessary software to maintain participation in online learning (OECD, 2020). It is certain to have unequal number of hours of instruction for some students while others may not receive the required number of instruction in a particular subject or course. The previous is consistent on Suttler (2018) who claimed that complete online instructions without peer interactions and well-coordinated activities are more or less an interactive book than a classroom. Moreover, there is a wide gap between normal online learning and emergency alteration which is characterized of hasty decisions without proper curriculum. Means, Bakia and Murphy (2014) have identified basic ingredients that can guarantee effective and well planned online learning to include; modality, pacing, student-teacher ratio, pedagogy, teacher role online, online communication synchrony, role of online assessments, and source of feedback. In addition, Branch and Dousay (2015) claimed that effective online line will be a function of careful instructional design and planning because, online courses created hastily, and without adequate preparation and resources would not be a lasting solution but a temporary one to an immediate problem. Barbour, LaBonte, Kelly, Hodges, Moore, Luckee, Trust, Bond and Hill (2020) in a study on education in an emergency situation suggested a need for teacher support programs ahead for a smooth transition from the normal to a new normal.

A pragmatic dimension of Emergency Remote Education is to approach it as a working solutions for everyone through provision of educational opportunities for all categories of learners. However, this work offers a pragmatic guidance to teachers, teacher trainers, policy makers, and government at all levels who must manage the consequences of disruption in educational systems. Therefore, for educational system in Nigeria to continuously play its role in the global knowledge economy, the following reflections could be of assistance in redefining the goals of education in the present and in projection for future occurrences.

Adaptation to the new realities

COVID-19 has created a state of emergency on teaching and learning worldwide (Murphy, 2020). The unique event suggests a new mode of instructional delivery and timely practices that will reposition learning based on pragmatic changes as a result of the evolving pedagogy (Moorhouse, 2020). Teaching during a pandemic is to carry on classroom teaching in an unrestricted and inclusive manner that meet the needs of learners from different background, and in using multimedia approach for lesson delivery. The previous submission is furtherance to Tate (2020) who opines that teachers should endeavor to present instructions in a manner by which learners of all categories will be stimulated to learn.

Moreover, to build a better society in time of crisis Corpuz (2021) have shown a need to examine the context and aspect of culture in which adaptations are needed in spite of challenges. However, according to Cordero Jr. (2021) there is a need for individuals and society to exhibit adaptive behaviors during crisis in order to get along, and this may mean cultural change through various reflections by adaptive individuals to look for alternative ways of doing things, and creative organizations with supportive government in the new normal. It is also in contract with Lagman, Vergara and Sarmiento (2021) that cultural determinant of every community is unique to defining identity and approaches to issues, especially communication in times of pandemic.

It takes adaptation to continuously live in the world and however, the global crisis and its consequences not withstanding has been a time for policy makers, teachers, students and families to learn, and reflect on such experiences for workable educational systems. Barron, Cobo, Munoz-Najar, Ciarrusta (2021) have suggested that the multiple role of teachers during the pandemic has particularly demands for pedagogical adaptations in which teachers are required to adapt their practices and be creative to keep students engaged in an open-ended learning environment.

Pragmatic Pedagogy

Teaching and learning can be helpful in a pandemic when it is pragmatically approached because human beings are social entities who becomes socially efficient through interaction and meaningful experience. Teaching is a social work which should be modified by all means, media and mode that can alleviate ill-feelings and anxiety for continuous and inclusive

learning in spite of the new spatial and temporal conditions. The previous statement is consistent on the earlier submission of Ozmon and Craver (2008) who viewed education as processes of action, and should be treated with all sense of mobility and dynamism to achieve desirable ends.

Pedagogy during pandemic is comparable with Doucet, Netolicky, Timmer and Tuscano (2020) who viewed teaching and learning during crisis with the mentality of 'Maslow before Bloom' in which provision for safety and well-being of students of all categories becomes a priority while planning and implementing instructions. It is also a kind of teaching and learning in a context of serious global disorder according to Smith and Hornsby (2020). Moreover, the new normal kind of pedagogy agreeing with Bautista (2021) is not just a shift in means, media and mode of instructional delivery but a framework for teachers to imbibe a new culture, and also develop an attitude to teaching that entails a realignment of conventional performance indicators, such that an effective pedagogy is measured by the deployment of appropriate technology to achieve continuous and inclusive learning.

II. CONCLUSION

The challenge of our educational system in Nigeria is that it focuses on creating the best solution to a particular educational problem as we forget that everything including education undergoes renewal and change. Therefore, as we focus on employing the best strategies and perhaps the most sophisticated technologies for instructional delivery, it is high time we focused on the users of such technologies in order to retain their ability to function in all situations. Teachers need peer and public support to incorporate technology effectively into their teaching practices and methods to help all categories of learners to overcome some of the difficulties that are associated with this form of learning environment. There should be provision of training skill sets for teachers to be prepared for occurrences due to safety concerns and natural disasters, and it should be viewed as a departure from the normal to something practical and effective to teach students from different backgrounds. In addition, it is important to empower teachers by investing in the required skill sets development and capacity building to explore the full potential of remote and blended learning. Finally, in order to build stronger education system teachers in Nigeria should adopt a hybrid system of teaching by integrating those teaching initiatives that have proved to be effective during the Emergency Remote Teaching into their regular classroom teaching. Education is an investment, valuable and competitive for the survival of the future generation, and so there is a need for re-think by all parties involved in education to design a curriculum that anticipates crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

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