

THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN A PANDEMIC ERA

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Abstract

This paper x-rays the role of educational research in a pandemic era. Using a descriptive approach, it outlines the emerging opportunities and challenges of education especially in crises, pin- pointing four elements of curriculum thus: goal, content, approach and evaluation. The paper recommended workable means of instructions while adhering to covid -19 protocols in a pandemic era.

Key words: Role, educational research, pandemic

Introduction

The new disease, as some natives call it, had come but has it gone? The corona virus has ravaged the world. Towards the end of December 2019, it was heard of like rumours but by March 2020, the awareness about the reality of the covid -19 was heightened resulting to the concern of Federal Government, private sector and global actors across Africa and the world. The pandemic was spreading and some authorities explained how 19 was attached to the virus. It took its name from the year 2019 just at the last lap of the year. Educational research during the period of the pandemic and valid statistics will do a lot of good in determining which pedagogy mostly rewards learners at the time when social distancing is the order of the day as Cohapay (2020) puts it ...'consider education a new in light of emerging opportunity and challenges, we see crises in four elements of curriculum- goal, content, approach and evaluations.

The author suggests that other aspects of education should be explored further to look at education in this new era in human history, hence the role of educational research in the pandemic era.

Education in Crises Situation

Amongst the several crises in Nigeria, Africa and the world, covid-19 in world history remains one of its kind that has dealt cruel blows on human population. inadequacy of data and palliative hinder progress in the area of successful intervention in education during the pandemic period lan et al (2016) depict most death occur for children withdrawal of life sustaining devices, not to talk of education, rising android phones that

most families cannot afford. Some women in labour delivered at home while the little ones whose parents are fairly comfortable engage lesson teachers for the kids. Applying ICT was a problem both for teachers and learners.

To successfully educate in a pandemic era, school administrators according to INEE (2020) must prioritise actions which must involve procuring materials for home learning, prioritise health and hygiene and foundational cognitive skills before focusing on area of skill development. This cannot happen normally without experimentation and research approach. The next step after prioritising action is to consider intervention, that are most critical as immediate shock resulting from school closure, transiting to a stage of new normalcy e.g. modifications on timing and pacing of curriculum content to see what is working and what is not working. This is in conformity with Onah (2020) who called for seminars and symposia during the pandemic lock down period these protective measures would have been taken as real time data is important.

In carrying out educational research during the pandemic era, researchers should analyse context which includes education sectors and stake holder needs and their assets; keeping in mind that almost all pre-designed assessment tools are intended for in-person use (face-to-face interventions), classroom observations and focused group discussion (FGD). COVID -19 infection prevention precepts need new methods of doing assessment for instance ICT, cell phones, other android devices and apps to interact with stakeholders INEE (2020) supports disaggregating data into gender, location, disability, ethnicity, language, most marginalised and vulnerable community. Most of the communities that have suffered constant crises are worst affected by the pandemic. Even before the lock down, school attendance was a thing to ponder about by both parents and learners. Describing the situation on fear, an online material labelled it as 'socio-economic pathologies that traumatised the region and necessitated the bloody confrontation'. If we live in trauma, education is not achievable. Education is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but the child is denied this by the coming of covid-19, militancy and insurgency according to Amaraegbu (2011).

Educational research has primary aim of giving a clear and actionable guide for safe operations through prevention, early detection and prevention of covid-19 in schools. Some schools, especially private, have been equipped properly for take-off of academic activities while the public schools apparently have not shown signs of preparedness. Schools are expected to conduct research on a continuing basis, monitor the following after- school reopening; Effectiveness of symptoms, effect of policies and measures on

health of children and siblings, trend in the school drop outs after lifting restrictions; number of cases in children and staff in school and frequency of school-based outbreak in local governments. According to the study by Cahapay (2020) and Onah (2020); there is agreement on the observation that covid-19 and its lock down accomplice can quickly change the context with which children live. Example, increasing exposure to protection risks, quarantine measures, school closure and restriction on movement, disruption of children's routine and social support while placing new stressor on parents and caregivers who may have to find new child care options or forgo work. Some recruit nannies or house boys. Educational research plays a vital role in determining ways to handle children who have suffered huge losses during the lock down. In the words of late Mariam Babangida, in a *foreword* to a book 'Pieces of me' 'the children out there are fractured, traumatised and are in pieces; having the assemblage of teenager thoughts; concerns, fantasies and expectations about their immediate and wider environment'. This paper, thus, aims at x-raying the various problems faced by education stakeholders and learners during the pandemic era with a view to suggesting workable means of instruction and adherence to covid-19 protocols in Nigeria. This could be replicated elsewhere.

Role of Research

Researchers report that the biggest opportunity at this time of extremity is the development of infrastructures and means of communication in short time that previously would have taken months or even years. The pandemic era witnessed such sharp responses by schools, even the poorest attempted to provide basic tools needed for prevention of covid-19.

In Greece for instance, communication of science is in the native language. Nigeria could borrow a leaf from that. It will go a long way in developing education in our country and on the continent if adopted by other African countries. The last two months, according to reports, scientists are being called much more in public debates to explain complex themes of the biology of the virus, clinical characteristics of Covid -19 and procedures and goals of research projects.

Additionally, there are many articles on popular newspapers about the importance of science and research and the value of research scientists in addressing real life problems. Research in education in the pandemic era will undoubtedly require introduction of languages in teaching and learning especially science.

Research also plays a role of learning misinformation. For instance, during the pandemic there has been a wide spread of misinformation on Covid -19 and its spread. Research community has the expertise and means to filter the quality and relevance of information and convey to the public what is worthy of attention. This helps also to prevent misinformation from spreading. If allowed to spread, it becomes difficult for the public to accept mitigation measures taken by government. It was glaring during the pandemic the manner in which people responded to social distancing and other measures. The research community therefore has to be vigilant and vocal in reporting their findings (Okike, 2020).

Researchers currently face challenges in areas such as funding; through what we call 'applied for translational research'. This has negative effect on investment in the area of discovery-based research (or curiosity) which will make us to very soon run out of things to translate.

Role of Publishers

Publishers can help in acceleration and publication of research results and can provide avenues for scientific debates especially in a period of isolation, in order to reach conclusions and decide on next steps in a credible context. They can also decide on a multi-disciplinary approach needed for the problem. Debate over 'Wuhan virus' is not racist. A lot of researchers attempted giving different names to the virus which wrecked the globe. We must note that accurate reporting is very important in research. Most academic health researchers must follow Federal regulations that govern how research with people, or their identified health data and samples, can ethically and legally be carried out. These rules generally require an independent review to weigh the risks and potential benefits of research to make sure they are fair to participants. They also require informed consent. These rules were written in the 1980s responding directly to emergency infectious disease research. That research was syphilis and the research was in Alabama. The study was done in Tuskegee where Afro Americans were merely used for experimental study which started in 1932, by the US public health department. It went on for about forty years, they could not access treatment for their syphilis.

In addition, many of the same government researchers were conducting sexually transmitted disease research in Guatemala- intentionally exposing and infecting prisoners, soldiers, psychiatric patients, and sex workers with sexually transmitted disease to test new ways to prevent their spread. It is important to note that in both of

these cases, researchers' experimented upon vulnerable people of colour a common theme in the sad history of research ethics in this country.

In a flu study at Seattle, the research participant in the Seattle flu study agreed that their sample would be tested for the flu and other respiratory pathogens (germs) and were notified that the state law requires the researchers to report certain infectious conditions, patients need to have their confidentiality.

Bringing students up in a group and teaching them has been the concern of educational researchers. Researchers were advised to prepare to work remotely (from home) make sure they have laptops, chargers, webcam; contact information for team members and access to any electronic materials. If they do not yet know how to use skype, zoom and hangout, this is the time. In a pandemic era, more findings are expected from educational researches which will enhance ease of learning without getting in contact with the teachers. The issue of digital literacy is a great concern to educators and researchers during the pandemic era. Many researchers who rely on face- to- face interview may have to go on line, and if they are shifting to remote data collection and storage, they should keep in mind that changing methodologies means modifying institutional review board approval and doing another round of consent.

All - in - all our admiration and respect should go to everyone interested in fighting the covid-19, especially from front line health workers, nurses, physicians, and all those exposed in hospitals and long-term care facilities (including schools) and those food vendors and essential products or those maintaining infrastructure. It touches everyone, no wonder a number of researchers from various fields want to contribute to the fight against corona virus. Identifying the multi-disciplinary approach to dealing with the pandemic, some authorities argued that social sciences and arts play a key role.

Covid-19 according to the above blog has devastated communities and economy around the world and changed the way in which we live and work (this includes education). Many of these effects are seen to be temporary but the pandemic has also created opportunities for us to 'build back better' once the immediate threat recedes. Medical science has been at the fore front on the fight but social science and scientist have a powerful role to play in our recovery from it. Educational researchers together with social scientists help perform the role of mass education so as to enhance mitigation efforts made by government. (Young 2020) supports that effects temporary.

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