AERC Project Findings (ABUJA)

Abbreviations

TPG: Teacher, Government Primary School

TPP: Teacher, Private Primary School

EDP: Educational Planner, Primary (UBEC)

TSG: Teacher, Government Secondary School

TPS: Teacher, Private Secondary School

EDS: Educational Planner, Secondary (SEB)

NGOs: Non-governmental Organizations

GOs: Governmental Organizations

PP: Proprietress, Public Schools

Pp: Proprietress, Private Schools

Parent/Guardian

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe the kind of difficulties that COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown brought to educational activities in your state?

TPG: Is it the positive or the negative?

INTERVIEWER: both

TPG: I feel like before the COVID, the children were congested in on place, coming together. Like you can have a class of 70, 60, in one class, that is in the government school, not the private school, coming together and learning together. But when the COVID came, the children were not more than 25 in a class, so in a way, learning was easier after the COVID. But the problem then was that, they didn't have teachers to cover the whole classes. Like, sharing a class of 70 into three, and in one class, we have like four arms, so if you are going to break those arms into 25, you will have more than 10 or twelve classes, so how can a teacher cover the whole arm, so it was still difficult for learning and some of the schools now changed to morning session and afternoon session, that is a shift. So, in the case of the shift, the children that came in the afternoon were not really comfortable like those ones that came in the morning, and most of

them, at that period was the mango fruit period and in my own school, most of the boys would climb the mango tree or stay under the tree to be eating mango and there was no way we could chase all of them to go to their classes as we didn't have enough hands to control the students, so, that was one of the challenges we were facing at that time. It made learning to be easy, but it was not that easy because of no hands, we didn't have enough teachers in the government school to handle it, so it was just difficult.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you've been able to tell us some of the things that happened after, let's talk about the lockdown, what can you say happened?

TPG: Everybody was in their various houses, like in the government school, learning was not taking place because, how can you gather them together, they are many, and you cannot really bring them together, so everybody was on their own, schools were locked down and we were unable to relate with the children, that is for the government schools…

INTERVIEWER: Were there any attempts to reach the children?

EDS: I think I have something to say on that. Just like we all agreed, during the lockdown, it was a total lockdown, in fact, there was no movement at all, there was curfew but my office came up with an innovation during the lockdown that covered basic education. We developed what we called, "learn at home radio and television programme", which covered the syllabus that he students within basic education were supposed to learn within that period in the FCT but it somehow extended to parts of Kaduna, Niger, Nassarawa, Some of them could access the radio program so, we used one of our schools that have a standard studio, that is, the Nigerian-Korean School. We have studios there and we used professionals from NTA and ASO radio and television. We got our teachers who did a kind of voice recording in the studio and it involved a lot of things, we did so many things to bring out exactly what we wanted and I think up till – I don't know if ASO radio has stopped, but long even after the pandemic, they were still airing it and we were getting responses from students from the interior because our phone numbers where there; some of them would call that their assignments have been done, how do they submit it and all those things so, we made attempts to provide that and to be able to engage the students. We also purchased small transistor radio sets which we distributed to both the junior secondary school principals and the head teachers and it was supposed to be that at a particular period, students were supposed to gather around and listen and those who had their own personal radio could also go ahead. We got fliers which we distributed through the LEA's, so many of them were sensitized to listen to the radio program. I think basically, that was what we did, we had a plan to come up with provision of special tablets -customized tablets but we commenced discussion with some of the service providers to be able to provide free data for students but it didn't get to implementation. I think it's still at the discussion stage, but we are looking at a situation where we bring in development partners who will provide tablets because we used to have CMPC's ,that's; Classmate Personal Computes but we discovered that many schools could not make use of it, so many reasons being that they pile them up in the offices and some of them,

the batteries ran down, some, the operating system became outdated so, that couldn't work but we concluded that if it is tablets, everybody can always charge it in their homes and then if they are able to provide internet but those were some of the things we were considering, trying to reach out to some of these service providers, MTN…

INTERVIEWER: So, some of these things you have said, was it state-wise or FCT, and for the provision of these programs, were there follow-up programs to know if some of these students were actually listening to the program and learning?

EDS: Yes, it's FCT as a whole. Yes I'm from the Planning and Monitoring unit so, we engaged some of our staff to reach out to them, though it was not something we were able to reach too many schools, but at least, we were able to get a feedback that, yes, they were aware that such program was on and it was successful because we actually reached at least, the six early years. Also, from the feedback we got from phone calls from the students; some of them will call the head of planning in my office, so there was interaction between the students and the teachers.

INTERVIEWER: Does anyone here have contrary opinion about learning opportunities in FCT, Abuja?

TSG: I wouldn't say it's contrary, like I am in a Public school and we actually tried to organize all those moral lessons but we discovered that most of the students can't even afford the data, they were using "torchlight" phones and they don't have access to androids, and when school resumed, we discovered that majority of the students were not in the class, so they had to organize extra-morals, you know, just like we couldn't do morning-afternoon, after the normal lessons, we give them an hour, then we start the lessons because we were in another term, to make up for the lost term. We had to make up for the loss incurred, and you see, the teachers were worn out, at times, students were not concentrating, it's not easy being in school from morning to six , so, those were some of the challenges that we faced. In the private schools, they were going on; the parents are rich and all that. But again, there's a positive aspect that I noticed. During the lockdown, when all the children were at home, there was this bonding, you know, before, the father will go, mother will go, children are off to school, you'll just come back tired from work, no bonding, but this time, we were together, we even played games with daddy, we enjoyed family time, everybody was bored but it was a time for coming together. I want to say that this is a positive aspect on the path of the lockdown that we experienced. We were able to listen, to actually understand these children; I wasn't too busy to run off to work. That's the positive side.

TPG: Okay, like the radio program, it's not everybody that had access to radio program and educational program at that time, and at times, there was no light to listen to it and it was on air and some children-you know that was when they started e-learning on television, there were some television stations that were airing but it's not every- it was not too common the common children.

Pp: Yes, I was going to add to what the second to the last speaker said about family unity. I have it here in my point. My first point is on the teacher's path, since I have some experience in schools, teachers and parents. Most of the teachers reported losing their jobs during that time of lockdown, especially the private school teachers because, there was no work and no pay and that also took them to learn skills, most of them acquired a lot of skills, I could remember, one of my teachers went into sewing and then he is not teaching again because he has seen pleasure, so they went into skill acquisition and also studies. In the unity of the family, I saw that parents became teachers because there was no teacher to teach, so, they were clustered together and it brought unity. The parents were closer to their children, they were the teachers because I could remember I taught my child English, math, and my husband was teaching them in the science and technical aspect, so, we automatically became teachers and that brought closer relationship and that time, we had a very strong family bond and relationship.

INTERVIEWER: Can you shed more light as a proprietress on some of the challenges you had during COVID19?

Pp: Since we were not there, there was no school, so they withdrew…

INTERVIEWER: Did you get any help; did you try to seek for assistance?

Pp: When everybody is inside, where would you seek help or assistance from? You don't go out to talk to anybody, there was no interaction because I don't know who is sick in my neighborhood, so, it was affected and there was no help. I didn't have any help, the withers resigned, the parents withdrew their children and most schools were closed down, ad up till now, some schools are not revived again. Most schools did not come up after the COVID 19

EDS: I want to say, the government said they were going to provide assistance to private schools, I don't know if they did not…

Pp: They did not. We went, we filed our names, registered and did all the protocols but until now, we've not gotten that intervention, so there was no intervention from anywhere, so we were hoping, you know, we waited till most schools resumed in 2021 and I have not resumed my school. Yes, because, one, the landlord inflated he rent, it was a rented apartment and it was a loss, because all that time, we were not pad, so we had to close the school. So, this September, we are opening. We also had to go to our own private land and build up the land to start up.

INTERVIEWER: During that time, were you engaging students on ICT learning?

Pp: Yes, so what we did was introduction of ICT which was a difficult one; something that you are not used to but you need to do and the parents also found it very difficult to pay because the price was high, (Not audible)… everything was high; the school paid so much for the ICT service delivery.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, let's go to the teacher's side. You used radio in the FCT, did you ever try ICT?

TGP: It was not possible, even in the school…

EDS: The thing is that the whole thing falls down to funding. Like I said, in the FCT Education Secretariat, we have what we call SESP and SESOP. SESP is, Strategic Education Sector Plan, and SESOP is Strategic Education Sector Operational Plan. The SESOP is a three year plan that we make to, you know, take us- a kind of roadmap for the education system. Now, in the course of what happened in Covid19, the last SESO we developed, we came up with the six thematic areas. Normally, we used to have five thematic areas; access, funding efficiency and management, etc. but we now came up with the sixth thematic area which we called; Emergency Response Preparedness, because everybody was kind of cut off guard and that will involve making plans of what to do in cases of emergency like, insecurity for instance, the pandemic, flooding, etc. so the issue of e-learning has been in the front corner, in fact, there is an FCT policy on e-learning but funding actually has been an issue. We tried to provide computers, there are schools that we designate as e-learning schools but up till now…

INTERVIEWER: Why e-learning schools?

EDS: An e-learning school is supposed to have interactive boards, everything, and the teachers are trained so that they can make use of the equipment and the students are also trained…

INTERVIEWER: So, I go to the training aspect, the teacher's training; do you think the teachers were fully rained to take up the task?

EDS: That is the challenge we are having. We are still at the point of that training. UBEC provided what we call; teacher professional development, where select teachers are being trained but it's a normal training that UBEC provides, we call it TPD, but it's not enough and in fact, so many teachers have not been trained because of that, because of funding, the funding is just not enough. But just like I said, to have an e-learning school, will take not less than $35,000000 and when the budget comes up, you can see that the whole education secretaries, FCT budget cannot even cater for that. So, we are working on trying to reach out to development partners. From our plan we have what we call funding gap and from our funding gap, we are able to bring in development partners and state that this is our plan, this is what we have money for, and this is where we need you to come in with intervention.

INTERVIEWER: Can you say some of the development partners you worked with?

EDS: Oh! So many of these, like the Korea Government; they built one of the best schools for us in Puwei, that is, the Nigerian-Korean School, it is so well equipped, in fact, just like schools are in Korea, that's how the school is and our teachers were selected, taken to Korea and were trained and brought back, so they are doing excellently well, and we have the Chinese

Government, they also built a school in Karo, the British Council are also part of our development partners, UNICEF, UNESCO are all development partners.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think would have been done to forestall or reduce some of these shocks?

EDS: That is why I told you that we came up with the emergency response preparedness. It goes into different areas like emergencies which can be; health pandemics, flooding, insecurity. Sometimes, situations can come where schools are taken over by refugees, so what happens to the students? So, we have a design of schools that we call the collapsible classrooms. The collapsible classrooms are supposed to be things that can be set up easily within a short time and it becomes a class and students are attending and when it's not needed, it can be collapsed, packed up and stored. So, we are trying to reach out to NEMA because, collapsible classrooms are expensive to produce, so, we want to see if NEMA can buy into the vision of that. We also make plans of training students. It is in this current budget to train students school by school, especially boarding schools on what to do in case of an emergency, either insecurity, fire incidents, etc. there are things we put in place, like, if this happens, this alarm will go on, this is where you will all run to, and the teachers are trained on the escape route to take students to. Then, in the area of health, we are making plans to provide more funded school clinics…

INTERVIEWER: I want us to talk more extensively on health, but before we go there, let's go to social protection programme. Before the COVID19, there were programs like the home grown school feeding programme, and what happened during lockdown?

EDS: I will say that it was ongoing…

Pp: When did they deliver?

EDS: It's something we… its something… please, let me not bother to go in that area…

INTERVIEWER: Let's clarify, because this is part of what we will be reporting. Were the students given anything? Did they come to say that, "when we were on lockdown, this was given to us?"

EDS: I think you are a researcher, maybe you'll carry out research to find out if those things were given

INTERVIEWER: That's why we are asking you…

TGP: Like in my school, we didn't experience anything.

Pp: In my school, we did not see, because there was no movement, there was no interaction, so how did they distribute it?

INTERVIEWER: Did you hear that in the north, food was distributed to homes?

EDS: I think that the issue of school feeding is actually handled by the Social Welfare Secretariat of FCT, so, I am from FCT UBEB board, so I am competent to speak effectively on that.

Pp: When we were advising the children not to exchange food, not to collect and not to give, because of contamination due to contacts, so, how come the children were given food?

INTERVIEWER: The palliatives, just to make sure that children are well fed during that period.

TGS: Like in my own school, they actually brought palliatives…

INTERVIEWER: From the federal government?

TGS: I don't even know who brought, they told me…

EDS: It is usually coordinated by the federal government and different organizations.

TGS: They brought bag of rice, small bag like this. When we got home and we opened those bags, I've never seen such rice…

INTERVIEWER: So, you got palliatives in your school, but it was not widely spread.

TGS: It was completely inadequate, it didn't go round…

EDS: Some people got the palliative; people from the board headquarter…

TGS: What they did was that they just shared it within the PTA teachers…

EDS: But, even in the office it was not all the staff that got. Names were selected, they went to Arts and Culture where social welfare is and they were taken to warehouses, where, just like she said, some got bags of rice, garri, maize and millet.

TGS: Grains in General.

INTERVIEWER: So, what do you think that the government could do to prepare better for this kind of emergencies or unprecedented events in the future? As a parent and a teacher, especially for young children during these kind of emergencies

TGP: Like even before the COVID, we didn't even have good learning environment. Like in my own school, we don't have seats; some of the children sit on the floor…

INTERVIEWER: Even in the FCT?

TGS, Pp, TGP: Yes!!

EDS: Right now, there is a research, it's in the office, and maybe it will be out in the next three weeks. What we call condition survey, where we'll send our staff to every school to get good pictorial representations to know the exact state and situation of the schools. Now, the truth remains that, even when such things are ciliated, it can only be select, maybe the extremes, like they say, lets pick this number from each LEA, because the thing is everything comes down to the budget allocation to education and we can only das much as the budget can carry. That's why I talked about funding gap, and we are doing everything to reach out to the development partners to come in to fund education because, recently, we carried out what we call National Personnel Audit for the Universal Basic Education Commission and we went from school to school, both private and public and I can tell you that even some of the private schools, I went to a private school near Zuba and I couldn't believe that it was a private school; it was built like a small shop with wood and I came in and looked at them and was amazed. On the other hand, some private schools are in a state of excellence, some others are, in fact, some shouldn't be approved and some of them refused to allow us come in because they were thinking that we will shut down the school if we look at the whole thing but that was not our intention, our intention was to be able to know the number of out of school children in the FCT. A large number of what we have as out of school children are in private schools that were not accounted for because, when we conducted annual school census, many private schools avoided capturing and if we didn't know their existence and enrollment, we will not be able to have the number of children. So, by the time the national population commission gives us the school age population in the FCT and we get the enrolment in public schools and a few private schools, by the time you deduct it, you will have a huge number of out of school children, meanwhile, we know that many of them are in private schools but some of the private schools will lock their gates and won't let us in until the national assembly begin to threaten that there will be consequences. Many of them later responded

TGS: As a teacher, I think the government should improve in ICT in schools, in case we are going to have another crises or lockdown because, most of these schools don't have sufficient devices. Like in my school, the few number of computers we had, armed robbers came and took them. At times, there will be no light, there will be no gen, the gen will break down or there will be no petrol and if the gen is functioning, and there will be nobody to operate. So, we should improve on ICT. Today, we can do so many things online. In fact, during the lockdown, I did two courses; one from Oxford and one from Germany out of boredom and it was so real and you'll think that you're in a literal class. So, if we can just improve on our ICT, it will go a long way, that is, if anything happens, we can always continue our learning but these things are not

EDS: I think private organizations can put pressure on the government to make it a policy issue. Like I said there is a policy, but it strengthens the operationalization of the policy on e-learning…

Pp: If you just say ICT, ICT is limited…

EDS: It talks about the devices, the ICT, the data, all that is required to make it functional and like I said, we are working on it but private organizations should come in in…

INTERVIEWER: So, we are looking at PPP, Private Public Partnership?

EDS: Exactly!

INTERVIEWER: Now, let's go back to mixed learning opportunities. You said the good side of covid19 was that the overcrowding was reduced and they were able to have access to a more conducive classroom, but you also talked about inadequacy of teachers. Has this problem been resolved?

TGS: Like now, after covid19, everything has been back to normal and there are no facilities like chairs for the children. Even if you want to separate the classes, where is the furniture? And there are no teachers, like in a school, for instance, in area 1, we don't have teachers and there are opening new schools and they will pick teachers from the old ones without replacement, so most of the schools do not have teachers.

EDS: There is a plan, a file for us to employ for the past three or four years…

EDS2: For the employment, just like he said, there has been this request for the teachers in schools and there was even a time they threw it open during applications but it has been there, they shortlisted for over three years and nothing has come out. There was a time that they were also making use of PTA and M-power, and corpers but all these ones are not working. PTA teachers are always more than the normal staff. I remember a school where the PTA chairman was saying that a program he attended, that they have almost 10 PTA teachers and there are people who want to go into the system but we do not understand, even we that are there we don't know why it has not worked out. But everybody knows that we have shortage of teachers.

INTERVIEWER: The shortage, is it due to not employing or unavailability of workforce?

EDS2: It's due to not employing…

EDS: There are over qualified teachers out there.

EDS2: If you request for one teacher now, for a particular school, you will get not less than 10,000 applications and they are all qualified, even teachers with masters and PhD struggling to go into teaching in secondary school. I personally have an example of somebody who has been looking for a job for the past seven years. He is a teacher, but the job is not there.

EDS: The thing is that some of them start up in the private school but the private school, the condition of service is so bad that they end up resigning because.

EDS2: But as I was saying, she got a job in the private school but they offered her ten thousand per month.

INTERVIEWER: In FCT?

EDS2: Yes! In the FCT, she lives around Bwari

TPG: Even the PTA teachers we engaged, we are paying them 15,000, in FCT

INTERVIEWER: Now, this is eye opening that I am getting this in Abuja; I thought I'm going to get something better than my south-western experience.

EDS: We are experiencing an emergency in education, (EIE) and there is a plan that we have that is already on ground, and we know what to do but the problem is the funding. We have one of the best plans and any development partner that comes and takes a look at our SESP and SESOP knows that, it's of international standard and we were trained by UNICEF to develop it and it is ready but the funding gap is so huge that despite what the government is doing, it looks lie nothing is being done

INTERVIEWER: Where do we go from here, what option do we have?

EDS: The truth is that we need funding. When we talk that education is free, education is actually not free. Parents will have to wake up and they are actually doing a great job because the PTA teachers are payed solely by the parents. We have the SBMC, School based management committees in our schools and they are also doing their bit, and it is made up of alumni's, community members, staff of the school, religious leaders and influential people in the community, but even these SBMC members need serious training and we need more NGO intervention in our schools and if not for the intervention of the UBEB, the efforts of the government will merely be enough

INTERVIEWER: So, let's look at the pre-primary and primary level; don't you think we are neglecting that aspect? What can you say about the way the government is taking education at that level?

EDS2: Most pre- primary institutions are not under the government, the private sector takes care of that, because, when we talk of pre-primary, we are talking of kindergarten and nursery education, there are not so many. We can talk more on the primary.

EDS: We have what we call ECCD in our school. That is, early childhood care and development education, and we have about 700 public primary schools in the FCT and about 400 of those have ECCD. If you go to any of our schools, you will discover a section where you have the playground and we have trained ECCD teachers that specifically teach those students. We have ECCD1, 2, and 3 and from there, they move to primary one, so, in FCT, we have those ECCD's in our primary schools. We are collaborating with FCT College of education, Zuba to develop a curriculum for ECCD teachers and train them, so people will go in to read ECCD. Presently, we employ care givers and some of our other teachers to teach ECCD.

INTERVIEWER: So, what happened to the ECCG during the covid19 was there any particular attention given to them?

EDS: No, the whole educational system was under lockdown

EDS2: We had the stay at home radio and television program during that lockdown.

EDS: And like I said, It was developed for basic education; primary to the JSS and it specializes on the core subjects like, math, English, basic science, tech etc. and we had very good response from the community.

INTERVIEWER: Did we record anything like school dropout and at what level?

TPG: Most of the children in the government schools got pregnant, dropped out, got married and some went to learn a trade, while others relocated.

INTERVIEWER: Were there attempts to reach them

TPG: Yes, some explained that their real parents could not take care of them

EDS: Some of them that were in the private schools moved to public schools when their parents felt like they could no longer afford it and some moved from private schools to public schools.

EDS2: The private school was more protected during the covid19, they were learning through the internet and almost every day, some private schools were having their lectures online.

EDS: Maybe you can compare the enrollment in schools, pre covid19 and after covid19 to be able to get the data required

INTERVIEWER: Looking at what happened before, during and after the lockdown, in your own perspective, I want you to tell us the good side of covid19

TPG: Like in the government schools, many of them didn't have god sanitary facilities prior to the lockdown but after the covid19, NGO's and the government started intervening and building places where you can have access to water an wash your hands before going to class. Before, most of the students didn't really know what it meant but after that they knew how to wash their hands and protect themselves. Before, the children easily fall sick, but after that, you hardly see any child out of school due to sickness.

EDS: The same action plan that provided for the learn at home program also purchased sanitizers and washing equipment which were distributed to all the schools and most school presently are operating it. In most schools, you see had sanitizes, washing hand facilities, etc. so, it helps us to create a hygienic environment. Also, there is more effort on the side of the government, thinking and working towards e-learning more than ever before. Similar things may still come up and that's that gave us the idea of the Emergency Response Preparedness which

will be implemented very soon. We reach out to fire services, train teachers and students in the case of an emergency. So, the positive aspect of covid19 is that we are more concertized towards preparing ourselves for emergencies.

INTERVIEWER: So, are we doing it?

EDS: Yes, we are on course

TPG: Prior to the Covid19, most students don't come to school unless they want to commence exams, but after the covid19, the students came in their numbers and were coming early. Most of them said that they were tired of staying at home and that they've missed their friends and school activities

EDS: The NGO's should look into getting funding in the area of e-learning, so that we will be able to bridge the funding gap because, government alone can only do according to what is in the budget and sometimes, getting the budget released is another problem because, we have a situation where this is what we budgeted for, but what is actually released is considerably lower.

EDS2: We see that students become conscious of the health measures taught to them even after covid19 and it is imbibed in them. It also makes them to be exposed to e-learning. Knowing that is not just about having a phone and using it for other unnecessary things. They know the usefulness of e-learning.

INTERVIEWER: Any other consideration?

EDS: We also conducted a research on flipped classroom teaching strategy. Here, what normally happens in the school environment is taken home and what normally happens at home is taken to the school environment and it all goes down to e -learning and provision of devices for the students with data. Most time, the children do not even need to be present in the classrooms, as far as they have a teacher and a facilitator online, they do not need to do so many things in the classroom. They only come to class to be guided on some things and they are good to go and its part of the measures taken to prepare ourselves for e-learning.

EDS2: It also helps the student to learn on their own. They can be able to read on their own and understand.

INTERVIEWER: Regarding the radio program, do you think its contemporary enough to use radio instead of the e-learning?

EDS: No, both can be ongoing. In fact, the initial plan was to use the television but we discovered that the funds we had could not carry it. Even as the normal classroom is going on, the radio program can also be going on and sometimes, what you learn on radio seems to just stick there. Everything is just geared towards helping learning to take place

EDS: If a good support and intervention can come in towards the television program. Like we easily remember what we hear and what we see, it sticks more than maybe just hearing, so, if there is a support, because I remember in those days, between 4 and 6 PM, there was a program on the television and a lot of students learned through it, just like a repetition of what you've learnt and it will really help our early learners.

Pp: I wanted to comment on the radio program in the FCT. Most people don't have access to these radio programs, sometimes the battery will spoil and most don't have access to listen to the programs

EDS2: Well, you know that in whatever program you do, you must not get 100 percent coverage but it was at least, from the lay man point of view, it went fine and it went far, a lot of people commented on it

TPG: And whenever children hear that there is a program like this, they look forward to it

Pp: (not audile)

INTERVIEWER: Let's talk about the issue of equity. Can you tell us about the quality to access to some of these things from your own perspective?

ETS: Equity in terms of?

INTERVIEWER: During covid19, in terms of gender, ethnicity, etc. you can talk on it widely

EDS: We don't know much about other states.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, even within the FCT

TPS: There was this this thing I saw on the television where money was shared, it was on the table and the minister was sharing it, either in Zamfara or one of these northern states

INTERVIEWER: Let's talk about equity in the private and public sector

EDS: In terms of equity, the private schools were more engaged in learning during the covid19 than the public schools due to the online learning, but our radio program was one of the cheapest means of communication and you can see it everywhere and that was one of the factor that led us to develop the radio program because, it will be able to reach more people. And in the public schools, we have issues with gender.

TPG: In most public schools, we have more girls than boys …

EDS: Everything about the UNICEF now is on the girl child; they focus more attention on girls and pay less attention to the boys.

EDS2: I can remember a program that I went to, the program was centered on helping the girl child and after he program, I went to them and thanked them very well and also reminded them to try also to focus on our buys because, when we are talking about domestic violence, boys also fall victim and some boys are victims of rape. So, what about those who are perpetrating the evil? So we are also looking at enriching the male child too.

EDS: Also, bulling is a major issue right now and it affects all our public schools.

TPG: Like my son went to this science school in Pyakasa and he came back and told me that somebody flogged him 70 lashes of the Cain and I went to meet the VP admin and she told me that before they can flog that boy, that boy must have done something really bad.

INTERVIEWER: For 70 lashes?

EDS: It's a policy in our schools that we do not flog a child even if he has done something bad. Maybe if you had gone to the board, that teacher will be in for it. We don't take it likely.

TPG: My son was always telling me that he wanted to run away from school, so because of him, we had to find a place close to Lugbe to live so that he wouldn't run away. And he is the only boy; we didn't want him to stray. When he was now in ss3, he started punishing others as if he wanted to kill them.

EDS2: It was a risk you took, you don't leave a child where he in continuously being bullied…

TPG: We removed him from that hostel because of the hostel prefect and changed him to another hostel. He was the first set to go to Maitama ad when he went to Maitama, the VP admin flogged him because he bullied someone and inflicted wound on the person and the authorities insisted that he wouldn't be cleared unless I come to the school…

EDS: Madam, I also double as a SERVICOM focal officer in my office and we encourage you to go straight to the board if the school is not addressing issues like that because it can lead to trauma or even death on the path of the student.

TPS: So, bullying is still there but we are trying all that we can to eradicate it and it is mostly felt in the public senior secondary schools

EDS: Most of the basic schools we have are day, so the issues of bullying are not as pronounced as it is in secondary schools.

EDS2: And the issue of bullying is another reason why we have people leaving the public schools to the private schools.

INTERVIEWER: So, I need a suggestion from each and every one of us concerning how to prepare for a lockdown or a shock of any sort such that the covid19 has brought.

EDS: As far as education is concerned I think for me, it all goes down to making the e-learning more functional in our society, making it a part of our learning. It's a policy, that's the FCT policy on e-learning but the problem remains making it operational and effective.

INTERVIEWER: Can you just tell us the basic tenets the policy?

EDS: One of the tenets is to ensure that every school is equipped with ICT gadgets and whatever is required to facilitate the e-learning, both the hardware and software. And it entails provision of learning software's like "u lessons", we will develop an app where students, even with the lockdown can access the facilities and understand their syllabus and to have a portal where they interact with the teachers. Like in our office, admission is now online and processing their results is also online. Provision of these hardware's and soft wares still remain an issue and even when there is a lockdown, there should be provision for free data and customized devices for the students.

INTERVIEWER: Customized in what way?

EDS: Some parents don't even want their children to have these devices because, there are so many negative aspects but these tablets or phone are customized in a way that you cannot go outside the provisions of the educational syllabus. So, we should reach out to MTN, Glo, Airtel, NCC, Galaxy backbone etc. to find a way to provide data services for school aged children as part of their social responsibility to the FCT and to the community.

EDS2: And we should stop waiting until there is an emergency because it could also help if a child is sick or not able to attend school so that the child will not completely miss out.

TGP: And like some schools, they don't have even one computer, so what will they use to learn?

EDS: That is why the whole desktop thing isn't working out. Students don't even have access to the devices even when they are there for one reason or the other. I believe we can provide portable devices that every child can have access to and it is not expensive compared to the desktop and laptop. The thing is that we know what to do but keep gong round in circles.

EDS2: I remember a school that MTN supplied computers to. They piled it all up and the day the principal wanted to get them, they were already stolen.

EDS: you won't blame the principals, there are many reasons why the lock those devices up, maybe because it can be stolen from them or there is no electricity and fuel.

EDS2: I believe that they can provide portable devises that the children can even put inside their bags and have their name written on it even if entails parents paying some money for these services, it is actually worth it and it will be easy.

EDS: We had an Ngo that gave some of us from the office a particular tablet and until that tablet was stolen from me, you could access the internet with the tablet.

EDS: And stealing is now so widespread in Nigeria… (Everyone discusses indistinctly)

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much for the responses, like I said, it is basically for research purpose for the AERC. Have a nice day.