AERC Project Findings, Osun

Abbreviations

TSG: Teacher, Government Secondary School

TPS: Teacher, Private Secondary School

EDS: Educational Planner, Secondary (SUBEB)

NGOs: Non-governmental Organizations

GOs: Governmental Organizations

PP: Proprietress, Public Schools

Pp: Proprietress, Private Schools

Parent/Guardian

I: can you describe the kinds of difficulties that covid19 pandemic and lockdown brought to the educational activities in your state?

Pp: one of the effects of the covid19 pandemic to the student is that it affected their level of reasoning academically and it brought about depreciation in their learning faculty. It affected them to the extent that some of them had gone into activities that affected them grossly. Some got pregnant and others resulted to other deviant activities that affected them grossly. Many of them couldn't go back to school after the lockdown.

TGS: during the pandemic, what I discovered was that the number of students that went before covid19 was not actually the number that returned.

I: from your perspective, what could have been the reason for them not coming back to school?

TGS: maybe it was because they were no longer living with their parents and hat could be caused by a lot of reasons. Like my brother said, some of them got pregnant and some boys just developed an hatred for education because they've been just staying back at home. Some went to coaching centers to go and do their external exams and many of them did not come back.

EDS: the period of covid19 brought about serious negative complications on the educational system. For example, during the lockdown period, some teachers were receiving 20 or 15 thousand naira pay but when they went into other trades like buying and selling in the markets, they realized that they had more gains and most of them did not go back to their jobs so, up till

now, the effect of covid19 is still being felt in private schools because most of them have unqualified teachers on ground

TPS: we cannot apportion blames on the private Scholl teachers because we discovered that after the pandemic, most of the parents who were civil servants removed the children from private schools because they could no longer afford the school fees and what the proprietor and proprietress receives is what they will pay the teachers. So, if the students don't pay the school fees, what will the proprietor pay the teachers? And that is where the problem lies, so we cannot apportion the blame to the teachers that they just abandoned or run away from teaching because the motivation is no longer there and that is the economic effect of the pandemic. Even the farmers that used to go to the farm were not allowed to go anywhere and it was a big shock.

I: so, what do you consider some of the missed learning opportunities during the covid19 lockdown period?

EDS: in a school setting, students live together as a community and relate with one another in their various classes, but during the covid19 and lockdown period, there was no opportunity for them to meet as a group again. It also affected the teachers sociologically when they were locked down in the house, because interactions between their various teachers and students and all other groups was no longer there. Each of them had to be confined to their homes, so there was no way that they could gather together in the staffrooms to make discussions and to rub minds. Like during the normal school period, a teacher could go to the head of department and request for explanations on some topics and there was no room for that during the covid19. So, it had a sociological effect on the school community in general. At that time, I wanted to go to the office and interact with my fellow workers but it was not possible, so by the time they said level 15 and above can go to work, it was like a burden was lifted from me, so all of us rushed down to the office with anticipation. So, it is good to stay together and to rub minds together in form of discussion and to promote the mutual aspect of our relationship.

Pp: there was a wide discrepancy between the private school students and the public school students. The private school created a platform where they were able to teach the students but there wasn't anything like that in the public school. So there was a wide gap between the private schools and the public schools.

EDS: I want to make some corrections in that aspect. I worked in the ministry of education, so at that time in Osun state, the governor, governor Oyetola designed a platform for schools where they were being taught but some of them missed out because their parents were in the rural areas. So, there was also a platform for the secondary and primary school learners where all the subjects were being taught for the parents that could afford and access it. In fact, a time table was released for all the students but it depended on the response of the parents. So, the Osun state government put some things in place for all the students in the private and public schools.

I: what kind of platform was that?

EDS: it was in Google classroom…

I: so, that means people the rural areas could not access it?

EDS: they could, if their parents were able to have android phones but most of them could not afford it. Some time ago, a particular private school started the goggle classroom and eventually, the parents were asking for money for data, so the economic period was so harsh that some parents were not even able to afford the money for data but the state government did very well at that time; all the subjects in the primary and secondary schools were being taught at designated period of time. Teachers from district and educational offices were merged together to teach the various subjects online but the problem remained the economic situation. Most parents couldn't afford even 500 naira data to access the internet.

P: the government should have given people palliatives in terms of money but the government failed woefully in that aspect. They should have considered the social and economic status of the parents and given them money, so, I am just trying to highlight the government failure during the covid19 pandemic.

EDS: that was what the government supposed to do. By the time the lockdown started, there was an insinuation that the government wanted to give everybody 5000, if we can still vividly remember. Giving them the money would have gone a long way to alleviate the problems of the parents. Just 1000 naira had a lot of impact on parents at that time. Some people that I never knew before will just come to our house and beg for anything like food because of hunger so, how could someone that couldn't even afford food be able to buy data?

TSG: if we want to defeat all the hurdles of the aftermath of the covid19 on the educational sector. I think the covid19 started around November and December 31st, 2019 but Nigeria went on a total lockdown on March 2020. The problem is general; it's because we don't have data and when I say data, I mean the accurate number and figures of people that the government is supposed to take care of. Like a friend of mine travelled out of the country around January and by the time he wanted to travel back to Nigeria, around March, he was locked. He is Femi Adewoyin by name. He said that when he got to UK, every week, the government used to give them 500 pounds, which is for the husband, wife and children each. And when they go for shopping, his friend will urge him to take whatever he wanted to take because it is the government money. If we ask the government of Osun how many people we have in the public schools, they may not even know it and they are supposed to know it and to know that of the private schools because they are the ones indirectly controlling the private schools. If you get to the National Bureau of Statistics, we supposed to have all these data so that our children will be able to access them whenever they want to do some research, but we lack adequate figures and that is the problem that we are facing in the country. In fact, the government supposed to take care of each and every one of its citizens. Talking about the online lessons, one of the problems we faced was that most of the parents were forced to buy android phones and the aftermath of

that, a professor came to my office and complained about the implication of the online lessons, that the students will be using the phone till 3AM. We have the resources to take care of everybody in this country but the problem is that we don't have good leaders.

Pp: on the issue of having statistics and data, we can try to inculcate what is done in the developed countries. There, the moment a child is born, he or she has a National Identity Number. Most of our students now are facing challenges with the processing of the UTME form because of the National Identity Number. It shouldn't be when they want to write exams but as soon as the child is born. The moment the child is born, he should be given the NIN, so it wouldn't be a problem for the child when he grows up and wants to write exams. So, if we can do that, we will not be able to have enough statistics.

EDS: I want to react on the issue of data. When we mention data, we have accurate data in our schools for all the students in the public and private schools. We have everything at the ministry of education, but it is not the ministry of education that will roll out the palliatives but the government, so it is not that we don't have accurate data of the students in our schools; we know the numbers and he enrollment of students in both the public and the private schools but the problem is our leaders and when I am talking about our leaders, I am talking generally at the national level. There are some things that the state government cannot do because they rely totally on the federal government so when we want to give palliatives, it is the federal government that is supposed to do that and they failed woefully during the period and that was what brought about the #END SARS# movement. It was because the rich were enriching themselves to the detriment of the poor during the period of the covid19. There was a survival fund that was rolled out after the covid19 period that was around October 2020-January 2021 where they gave palliatives to some private schoolteachers, entrepreneurs and selected individuals. Although everybody had access to the internet, some people felt that it was a scam but the people that felt it was not a scam keyed into the system. During that period, the government did well, they gave up to 30,000 naira and 50,000 naira to selected people. They picked ten teachers from some private schools and the teachers that were able to meet with the guideline were given a sum of money in form of the survival fund. What I am saying now is that they should have done all these during the period of the lockdown and pandemic when the parents needed the money most. Although, the intervention really benefitted them, it was already late, damages were already done.

I: to what extent do you think this missed learning opportunities have affected students and teachers?

EDS: there were so many opportunities that were missed at that time like the other participant has rightly said, there was mass failure. When we looked at the external examinations that were conducted that year, most of the students didn't do well. They were supposed to start their exams during April and May but the lockdown started in March, so there was no time for the teachers to conduct adequate revisions for them and the problem that was created by this internet like my

earlier speaker said was very enormous. Some of these students instead of going straight to the site where they were supposed to learn, they go to another site entirely and begin to watch pornographic videos, play games and do all other things in the internet. So, it led to mass failure, even in their JAMB that was conducted that year was very poor. Then apart from that, it even reduced the level of concentration on the academic and learning for the students. Some people go into various works and trades and realize that they make a lot of money so they forgo their education. It makes them to feel very arrogant. When they came back to school, it was by the grace of God that teaches were able to capture and control them. There was a case that happened in Oduduwa; of one student that was disciplined by the teacher and reported to the parents and the father went to the school and began to beat the principal. The covid19 made the students to go so wild and there were not disciplined and you now some parents don't naturally discipline their children at home, so it was the limited time that the students were able to spend in school that the teaches were able to curb their excesses and inculcated discipline in them. Morally, the laxity was too much so it was a missed opportunity for them. Academically, there were not there; they could not sit down on their own and read and that was why some of them began to fly out to miracle centers at the end of the day where they believe that they just go for the examinations, and they are given the answers to pass and they will not be able to defend the result at the end of the day.

TSG: thank you very much, I want to just add to what participant one just said but before that, when we talked about missed learning opportunities; during the pandemic, we reviewed that we are backward in this part of the world because online classroom should be part and parcel of our education. Even if the government provides the platform for people to subscribe, it shows that the parents, the students and even the teachers have not been adapted to that system of learning.

I: was it there before the covid19 lockdown or it was just introduced at that period?

TSG: it should have been there earlier but the covid19 only reviewed that, because in some other parts of the world, academic activities were going on. Even though there was a lockdown, students were still being attended to through the online teaching and it reveals our witnesses in this part of the world and it led to moral bankruptcy on the part of the students because they had not been used to that before, so when they had the opportunity of going through the internet, they misused the opportunity and as a result, the value that they had for education reduced. Many of them began to see education as a scam because of the opportunities they got during the lockdown; for example somebody who had the opportunity of going to the construction site and was able to work and get paid at the end of the day decided not to go back to school.

I: so what do you think would have been done to reduce the missed learning opportunities?

Pp: in addition to what he said earlier, we also lack skills. We are exposed to the internet and others and even some of the teachers that are into it cannot even handle it so, this also brought about a lot of impediment and we also lacked the facilities. Before we had a reliable internet

service provider where we can key into the internet but now, things have changed. I think our government should help us and we can try to maintain some of the facilities that were on ground before and we can also give skills as some of us do not have the exposure on how to use the internet so the government should help us and the individual can also help themselves. The government cannot do everything.

TSG: first of all, I want to appreciate the government in the area of the skills we are talking about. So, for the past ten or fifteen years, the government created what we call technical college, but this time around, they have disoriented the technical schools because if you look that of Osogbo, Ife, Aara, etc. we hear about all these things because in the educational system of the 6-3-3-4, we cannot rule out the technical aspect because not all of the students can go to the university directly and the government has a lot to do about that area by providing the facilities to all the technical schools and colleges. I have a young boy that informed me that he wanted to go and write the NABTEB after his secondary school education to go to the technical college and I encouraged him because he had to be given the trade test and they usually call him "engineer" just like someone that went to the university so, those of you in the ministry should help us ring to the hearing of the government that they should help us to improve our educational system.

EDS: the technical education in Osun state is very good, there are so many facilities but the problem we have is the parents. Our parents believe that any child that goes to the technical school is a second class citizen and that is where there should be a shift in our thinking and our orientation. For example, about three or four years back, the Osun state government decided to put some benchmark on the promotion of our students. When governor Oyetola came in, he suggested that we should not be promoting all the students like we used to do before and that there should be a parameter like any student that doesn't pass should go back and repeat or go to the technical colleges. We tried it at the "Seventh Day Adventism" grammar school and the students left the school entirely to our surprise. They did not report back to the technical college and they did not go back to their school. So at the end of the day, it took about two or three years before the school could be revived back to normal activities because majority of the students didn't want to repeat or go to the technical colleges, so we need to talk and advice our parents and I think it is a national problem that we believe more in paper certificate than what you can do by yourself.

P: let me add something to that. The technical education standard fell woefully and that was what would have changed the parents mind. They didn't want their children to go to the technical schools because it was not up to standard, in fact, it is from her information now that it has gotten back its image which mean that people's awareness is not enough and we have to orientate the parents that technical education is now okay because, as a parent, if it is now up to standard, why will I say no? Because I am a practical guy, I studied chemical engineering, so, I will never stop my child from being technical but I just need information. There should make more awareness about it.

Pp: one other thing is that in order to help the learner, I advice that the school devise another means, instead of saying that the students fail, they can use another parameter that should be known only to the teachers and we try to encourage them and persuade them. Even abroad, they value technical education, they don't value certificate but they value handicraft and handwork, so we should look for a means of removing the stigma so that everybody will participate. I also had a student hat went to the technical school in Oyo state, the guy is now happily married with children and is now in money and people that have certificate don't have all these things, so why can we not try to promote hand craft and remove the stigma of failure.

TSG: most of our policies in this county are only on papers, people are not aware of some of the provisions of these policies. For example, there is provision for technical education in the national constitution and educational policies. Now, we are even practicing the 9-3-4 system of education, so any child that finishes his junior secondary education can either go to the technical schools or continue in ss1-3. That you are in a technical school does not mean that you are inferior to those in ss1-3 and it gives them more advantage because by so doing, we will have more technicians and most of our technicians are better off than our engineers. Immediately the students write their jss3 exams, they should be given a general orientation so that they will know whether to go to ss1 or the technical schools based on their talent, knowledge and interest.

I: when there is the lockdown, can the technical schools still be going on and still be effective as it was before the lockdown?

P: I think it should, the way you have said it that the ICT facility are put in place, so if they are put in place and the student also are empowered when they know what is expected of them and they have been tutored towards that. Then whenever there's any casualty….

I: Now thinking, can't government make it open to the public on televisions so that those in public school can have many opportunities, because it may not be easy for teachers to go to the media station to present.

EDS: There's a board for technical education in Osun state, maybe they are not really aware of it, they don't really sensitize the students and when you go to our technical college, the enrollment is tremendous, so I believe the awareness is gradually increasing.

I: During the COVID-19 period, do you think the learning activities were greatly disrupted or not?

EDS: all of them were at a very great disadvantage at that time because my child was also doing the online lesson and although, he had to buy a devise to get it done, the experience cannot still be compared to the normal classroom setting. We cannot compare the online lesson to the physical teaching. When they are seeing their teachers physically, the level of assimilation is greater than when they don't see their teachers. The government and the stakeholders were not really prepared to avoid much of these missed learning opportunities.

I: what do you think the government can do to prepare better for this kind of emergency or unprecedented event in the nearest future?

EDS: the government should be very prepared to take care of the citizens. Our government in Nigeria is not ready to take care of the citizens. The issue of education was just an aspect of everything, economically, the parents were down, the hospitals were closed so they couldn't even afford healthcare. Our government is meant to put all these things in place for us in Nigeria. They should be able to provide for all the citizens like they do in the developed countries. We are talking about introducing e-learning but we don't even have the gadgets to use. We have the resources needed to take care of everyone of us but our problem will always be corruption and bad leadership.

Pp: the government should also sensitize the populace and we should always be prepared for unseen circumstances. We can go to the social media and other broadcasting media and stations to inform the people and besides that, workshops should be given to stakeholders in their small segments where they come together. Like I am learning a lot from this workshop we are having now.

P: like the other speaker said, the government should invest heavily on ICT sin such a way that it becomes ubiquitous and every one will have access to it anywhere. The government should provide a seamless access to the internet and gadgets like laptop, phones and so on. We don't know the nature of another pandemic that might strike us, so we should get all the facilities ready.

Pp: we can't leave everything to the hands of the government. Some individuals can also assist. The NGOs can also provide the populace with ICT facilities and gadgets and community development agencies can come together and donate resources for the community.

TPG: the government has been trying by telling schools to invite their old students to help the schools. If you go to some schools, you'll see that they have ICT facilities and centers and it wasn't the government that supplied it but the alumni associations, so maybe the government should task the schools under to establish a strong alumni association. I do not know how they seek to enforce it but the government should try to motivate the schools in various ways.

TSG: thank you for your observation on the issues of the old students. A parent who is also the alumni treasurer of St. John's College told me the other time that they have about 50 million naira in their alumni account. And the government stopped the old students association from operating.

EDS: there was a government policy then where they stopped the old student's association from operating but that policy is no longer operational. The government policy is now legalized.

TSG: not audible.

I: so one of the solutions is that the government might not be able to do anything but the stakeholders, alumni and other NGOs can also assist the government. So, during the Covid19 lockdown, are you of the opinion that the students and relevant stakeholders were able to access adequate social protection such as school provided services and health and nutrition?

EDS: there was a complete lockdown and they were not able to access anything and even the homegrown school feeding came to an halt although, I don't know how they were doing it in the Northern part of Nigeria where they said they were still spending money during that period and they were keeping the money in their pockets. In fact, the lockdown gave us the opportunity of accessing our on herbal means of medications, majority of us went for the herbal treatment when we were not able to access healthcare.

I: so, could you mention some other services that you feel were provided by the government but were not too known to the public during the lockdown

Pp: some people come to us and pay us and we go to their houses to teach their children. That is he itinerant teaching, so we go from one place to the other.

I: and you were not afraid of being caught or contacting the covid19?

Pp: it was just within the community and we put the teachers together to go and teach the students. And we equip ourselves with the necessary covid19 facilities like the hand sanitizers and facemasks and social distancing and we use the board to teach them to prevent physical contacts.

EDS: what he said he did at that time was not agreed with at the ministry level. It was because we were not aware of that location; we were out at that time searching for locations where students were gathered together and where people flaunted the covid19 procedures…

Pp: sorry ma, we don't gather, I said itinerant teaching where we go to people's house which is one teacher to one or two students so it was based on the parents consent…

EDS: because, at that time we discovered that when the schools were locked by the government, some private schools wanted to make some extra cash and they organized their students to be coming to school for lessons and when we got the information, we had to move out and send some officials to make some arrests and sanctions although they were not taken to the police station. But due to the economic situation then, people just had to make little money and we understood their situation then.

I: where there any other services that were provided?

Pp: another one was the online classes, some students paid for online classes and some participated from outside the country and they were able to benefit from it maximally.

TSG: they have said it all, apart from online lessons and one on one teaching, I don't think any other service was provided.

Pp: Some people were selling flash drives that contained recorded information, textbook and so on…

P: for my own family, what we gained was that my generator was working 24 hours a day and during that period, we had so many television lessons, so my children were able to benefit greatly from it and they were able to understand and follow it up. Up to six or seven Nigerian TV stations were doing these lessons and some radio stations too.

Pp: what I also discovered is that some parents also equipped their children by buying them books and from there we were able to have young writers where some students developed themselves and begin to write and some of them now are producing their own books and have become authors and writers, poets and so on.

TSG: my daughter that wanted to study nursing but didn't have the opportunity to go for classes but they were able to get a platform like the zoom where they were able to learn and where questions will be sent to them. It was during the period of the pandemic that this girl discovered the ability to read well. She read and read and by the grace of God, she passed the nursing school examinations and is presently studying nursing.

P: I also took it upon myself to teach my children and I believe that most parents also used this method.

I: do you think that there was equity in the distribution and access to these services? Considering the gender and geographical locations?

EDS: naturally, girls have the tendency of obeying rules and regulations so when they said that no one should go out, most often, you'll see the girls staying inside but the boys will not want to be restrained so the restriction to some extent is majorly for girls and apart from that, the parents will not want their female children to be roaming the street because of their vulnerability

I: what about in terms of geographical locations?

TGS: generally speaking, the restrictions for those in the rural areas may not be as much as those that are in the cities where eyes are on everybody.

EDS: adding to what he has just said, there was even a time that the government laid restrictions only on the urban areas and when you want to travel to the farm, they given you free access. And the medical personnel were also free to go.

I: so, what do you consider major challenges in accessing the various services given to the children?

Pp: the economy is very bad and when it comes to cash, there is not so much that anyone can do but if someone is a bit well to do in terms of income; he or she will be able to avoid all these issues of purchasing computer sets and all but if there is no money, everything will be very hard for us.

EDS: even at that time, there was restriction on banking activities and there was no money in most of the banks.

I: what could the government and other stake holders have done better to improve access to all these services?

EDS: actually, I didn't really see the need for the lockdown because it was even the beginning of our crises in Nigeria. At the end of the day the pandemic went down naturally and they should have just been sanitizing us but that issue of lockdown really affected the economy. In my own opinion, it wasn't necessary

Pp: to add to what she just said, during the lockdown, I was opportune to travel to Lagos however I went with my personal car. When I got to Lagos, despite the fact that they said that a lot of people had died in Lagos, I was able to avoid contacting the virus. People were so many in the markets; it didn't look like a real lockdown.

EDS: and at that time, Oyo state which is our neighboring state did not lockdown.

Pp: and even in Oyo state we didn't record so many casualties.

I: so in the midst of the lockdown how do you think the government should have improved access to these services?

EDS: even before the government thought of a lockdown, they should have asked all the citizens to send the account number. They should have transferred money to all the citizens and they should have even distributed food so that by the time we are going on lockdown, it will be with ease like they do in other developed countries.

Pp: what we need to do is that in our different locations, we should try to sensitize people to do what is right. What we might face in the next years may even be worse than what we have been facing because I realized that the coming generation have this kind of greediness, so if we have the mind of doing what is right and we try to sensitize people to do what is right, it will really go a long way.

I: with regards to the ICT, which major virtual platforms were adopted and what do you consider the challenges faced by these platforms?

Pp: we talked about them when we listed finance, skills, availability of electricity, coverage problems and so on.

I: okay, do you know about any assistance given in the educational sector during the pandemic?

EDS: the Osun state government introduced a plan for teaching platform but most of the parents didn't have the dada required to access these platforms and this was a very big factor that affected the e-learning process during the pandemic.

I: do you think there was equity in the distribution of all these palliatives?

Pp: there was no distribution talk less of equity.

EDS: there was assistance like I said before but it was after the lockdown. I spoke about the survival funds that were given to private school teachers by the federal government and the e-learning platform was open to everyone irrespective of the gender.

I: what are your recommendations or suggestions that could better prepare us for unprecedented shocks in the nearest future in the learning activities?

Pp: like I said earlier, sensitization is very important. And like I said we need to be informed. Seminars like this should be held across the country to enlighten the masses on issues like this. Ignorance is very destructive and people need to be more informed about issues like this.

TGS: we should be more active, we should not wait until something happens before we begin to look for solutions. For example, it was during the lockdown that emphasis was places on personal hygiene that should be part and parcel of our lives. And the pandemic really exposed our medical sector; it showed that most of our hospitals are unequipped to withstand such so we should invest more in our medical sector.

P: in our markets, you hardly see any dustbin and the streets and drainage systems become a littering ground. They dump their refuse inside the streams and rivers around them and that causes environmental pollution and even these refuse can cause an epidemic on its own. The Federal government should look for ways to reduce environmental pollution.

EDS: talking about the learning activities, we need to focus on the students and learners. There are situations whereby there should be equipped and professional counselors in the various schools so they will be able to assist, advice and see the students through their learning difficulties. And out hygienic situation in the state and schools should be among our topmost priority. And our schools should be well fortified and equipped with professional teachers and learning facilities to ease the learning process. During the period of the pandemic, we discovered that a lot of the schools were burgled so we should try to enhance the security in our schools to prevent pilfering and stealing of important learning facilities.

TGS: the teachers can also serve as counselors in the schools; I believe we have what it takes. The teachers have been complaining that the government doesn't put their interest into

consideration. The government should try to listen to our plight and attend to out requests. We can only do so much; when the motivation is not there we can't take up our responsibilities effectively.

Pp: the government should give us good policy and an enabling environment that will support the growth of the educational system in Nigeria.

I: thank you all for your suggestions, this workshop has been officially brought to a close.