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Educational Leadership Response to Covid-19 Crisis in Providing Essential Educational Services in Nigeria

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Abstract

The tale coronavirus and the disease it causes, COVID-19 is one of the most unusual worldwide public health crises lately. Educational Leadership all over the globe and Nigeria have reacted by moving their educational and associated activities online; as a sense of immediacy swept the country. The decision to rotate to remote learning was made quickly, especially by those organizations working a common initiative model, profiting by a more noteworthy level of deftness, advancement, and joint effort. This study is therefore aimed at exploring the proactive measures taking by educational leadership to provide essential educational services even in the time of this global pandemic (COVID-19). Some of the measures includes; set and follow a clear timetable, have a mix of planned activities, teacher skills and technologies, connect with parents, provide psychological support to the community through the use Zoom the most for videoconferencing, Microsoft Teams Google Classroom, Edmodo, YouTube WhatsApp for communications and in some cases, recorded lectures. The study further highlighted few challenges faced during the pandemic by educational leadership and schools; learning the new technologies, the problem of too much too soon, the expense of technology, inadequate training, technological issues, the need to adapt content for blended learning, decreased motivation, lack of access to technology, poor power supply, and weakened relationships between students and teachers, etc. Conclusively, educational leadership and the student need to obey and follow government, WHO and NCDC instruction and precautions as to avoiding and reducing the spread COVID-19, such as; the use of face mask in public gathering and in school/classrooms, avoid close contact (within about 6 feet, or 2 meters) with among student, washing of hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze, etc.

Keywords: Education, Leadership, Responses, Covid-19, Crisis, Essential, Educational Services

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership has become a priority in education policy programs worldwide educational leadership is the professional practice of a leader (or leaders) in an administrative role(s) working with, guiding, and influencing educators in a particular context toward improving learning and other educational processes in early childhood education centers and in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions, also with aim of improving the quality of education and the education system itself (Bush, 2002). Educational leadership responsibilities should be adequately be distinct through an understanding of the practices that are required to make an improvement in teaching and learning. Educational leadership are seeking the best means in responding to the current pandemic known as corona virus. Highly contagious, the 2019 corona virus disease is a global health emergency of unprecedented proportions. The ongoing loss of life globally as well as the virus's ability to spread rapidly through communities, has generated a need for significant changes in the way the education community operates, educates and delivers services to students and families. COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of corona virus.

UNESCO estimates that over 850 million children and youth roughly 80% of the world's student population had to stay away from schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationwide closures are in force in 110 countries and local shut-downs in many others. This represents more than a doubling in the number of learners prevented from attending educational institutions, with further increases expected during this COVID 19 pandemic (World Health Organization, 2019). Responses to the pandemic within the international education community have varied from heroic to problematic, as educators, leaders, administrators and education policy workers navigate shifting information, priorities, resources, and political and economic concerns. As education leaders have responded to the current crisis, many challenges and obstacles to providing essential educational services have emerged.

Additionally, questions have been raised about whether and how students and schools can meet education goals, how schools can provide adequate support for students, particularly those with poor background, special educational and mental health needs, and how education leaders, including, but not limited to: principals, head-teachers, superintendents, teacher leaders and so on can collaborate and coordinate with government, non-profit, parents and other stakeholders to meet student needs. Along those same lines, many schools are providing essential support to schools, districts and emerging leaders, sharing resources, advice and support as practitioners search for answers and ideas for how to proceed. In this special issue we hope to capture and provide an opportunity for analysis and critique of these and other challenges, responses, successes, mis-steps, ironies, and policies which have developed or transformed as the Corona Virus spread across the globe.

While other critical needs such as health, water and sanitation are being responded to, educational needs cannot be forgotten and these have an equally detrimental impact if left unaddressed. The 'pile-on effect' of the coronavirus is that, during the global COVID-19 pandemic, interruptions to education can have long term implications especially for the most vulnerable. There is a real risk of regression for children whose basic, foundational learning (reading, math, languages, etc.) was not strong to begin with. And millions of children who have already been deprived of their right to education, particularly girls, are being more exposed to health and well-being risks (both psychosocial and physical) during COVID-19 (World Health Organization, 2019).

With the global crises associated with the pandemic, therefore need for thorough investigation and analysis of its implications to education and how education leadership responses to COVID-19 crisis as to providing essential educational services.

CONCETUAL CLARIFCATION

Education Leadership

Educational leadership is the process of enlisting and guiding the talents and energies of teachers, pupils, and parents toward achieving common educational aims (Bush, 2002). Educational leadership is a collaborate process that unites the talents and forces of teachers, students and parents. According to Knerl (2019), an educational leader serves as a guide and influences other educators in an administrative setting. In some cases, it may be a team of educational leaders. Leaders in these executive roles work toward finding ways to improve learning and to improve the process of educating students. They serve in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions as well as early childhood education centers. School site leaders, directors, principals, and assistant administrators are employed to work either as the sole educational leader or in small teams.

Educational leadership is usually the responsibility of school administrators and principals, who strive to create positive change in educational policy and processes. Educational leadership involves working with and guiding teachers toward improving educational processes in elementary, secondary and postsecondary institutions (Chemers, 2000). Those in educational leadership roles tend to go above and beyond just management and administrative tasks, however. They are trained to advance and improve educational systems and create and enact policies. Educational leaders usually are employed as school principals or administrators but can take on additional roles, such as department chair or academic dean.

Bush and Glover (2003) sees educational leadership as a process of influencing and leading a school community to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful educational leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff, students and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared towards the achievement of this shared vision.

Three Elements of Educational Leadership (Knerl, 2019)

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is the "ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated" pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. A lifelong learner is someone who understands that learning is a continuous process and also to bring their context into that experience. Making lifelong learning a personal priority gives educational leaders the authenticity to share its value to others. Therefore, it not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development, but also self-sustainability, as well as competitiveness and employability. Educational leadership personal commitment to lifelong learning is vital to succeeding in an educational or

organizational leadership role. Everyone is a learner and should constantly be urged to be learning new things

A system of Experiences

Educational leaders should practice critical thinking, empathy, collaboration, and flexibility in a variety of work environments and people in order to engage, lead, and effect change in a meaningful way. For this reason, experiential learning as a core tenet offers students the chance to practice these leadership skills in real-world situations that mirror the environments they will work in after acquiring the skill and knowledge. Experiential learning is therefore, a critical quality for leadership today that increased self-awareness and an understanding of tools such as design thinking.

Inclusivity

An educational leadership is one that is becoming more prominent in classrooms and everywhere inclusivity. Inclusive prosperity is all about looking at the world, investigating, analyzing, coordinating influencing the institution so as to attain the educational set goals. Leaders intuitively know that being inclusive is the right thing to do, but it also has a positive correlation to the success of organizations. As workplaces acknowledge the benefit of focusing more on diversity in hiring, there is an opportunity to recognize diversity in thought and experience among the teams already working in an organization. Recognizing and being inclusive of the strengths of your internal workforce, rather than continually pursuing external talent, can strengthen an organization. An equipped educational leader will know the best ways to bring people with all types of backgrounds and experiences together.

Educational Services

Educational services means classes, programs, activities or other services designed to provide an appropriate education to a student determined to be in need of special education or to a student not determined to be in need of special education (ETS, 2017). In the case of a student determined to be in need of special education, educational services and educational related services shall be provided in accordance with the Individualized Education Program (IEP) developed for the student by the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) of the student's LEA. Educational services means the making available of school accommodation, the provision of teaching and pastoral support for children, the provision of careers advice, liaison with parents and guardians of pupils, related management and administration and the carrying on of extra-curricular activities for pupils.

Educational services means the provision of teaching and pastoral support for school age children, the provision of careers advice, liaison with parents and guardians of Students and the carrying on of an extra- curricular activities for Students and the use of school accommodation by the local community (Storey, 2010). Educational services means any of the following types of services to provide instruction in the academic areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Rajagopalan (2020) asserted to educational services a widely considered a counter-cyclical industry. That is to say, typically, when the economy is doing poorly, running into

recession and unemployment rate is rising as well as all schools shutdown, government and educational leadership brainstorm, analyzed and decides to provide adequate educational service education by going extra mile in delivering quality educational service which is caused by the COVID-19 pandemic globally. As such, most educational institutions introduced programmes and service that will equip the teachers that in turn, they can perform effectively in teaching-learning process to the student in line with current trend and best international standard.

Education has been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic with 1.53 billion learners out of school and 184 country-wide school closures, impacting 87.6% of the world's total enrolled learners (Rajagopalan, 2020). Drop-out rates across the globe are likely to rise as a result of this massive disruption to education access. So continuing education through alternative learning pathways, as soon as possible, must also be a top priority right now, to ensure the interruption to education is as limited as possible. We urgently need to support teachers, parents/caregivers, innovators, communications experts and all those who are positioned to provide education, whether through radio programmes, home-schooling, online learning and other innovative approaches.

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. 2019-nCoV is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans and causes COVID19/coronavirus disease (World Health Organization, 2019).

Corona virus (so called because when a coronavirus vireos is viewed under an electron microscope, the fringe of projections from the viral envelope resembles the solar corona during a solar eclipse) (National Institutes of Health, 2019). COVID-19 is also any family of single-stranded RNA viruses that infect mammals and birds, causing respiratory infections such as the common cold and SARS in humans, and that have spikes of glycoproteins projecting from the viral envelope. The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019)..

The disease is called coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic. Public health groups, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and WHO, are monitoring the pandemic and posting updates on their websites (World Health Organization, 2019). These groups have also issued recommendations for preventing and treating the illness.

Symptoms (World Health Organization, 2019)

Signs and symptoms of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may appear two to 14 days after exposure. This time after exposure and before having symptoms is called the incubation period. Common signs and symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Tiredness

The severity of COVID-19 symptoms can range from very mild to severe. Some people may have only a few symptoms, and some people may have no symptoms at all. People who are older or who have existing chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, severe obesity, chronic kidney or liver disease, or who have compromised immune systems may be at higher risk of serious illness. This is similar to what is seen with other respiratory illnesses, such as influenza.

Causes (World Health Organization, 2019)

Infection with the new coronavirus (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, or SARS-CoV-2) causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The virus appears to spread easily among people, and more continues to be discovered over time about how it spreads. Data has shown that it spreads from person to person among those in close contact (within about 6 feet, or 2 meters). The virus spreads by respiratory droplets released when someone with the virus coughs, sneezes or talks. These droplets can be inhaled or land in the mouth or nose of a person nearby.

It can also spread if a person touches a surface with the virus on it and then touches his or her mouth, nose or eyes; although this isn't considered to be a main way it spreads.

Risk Factors (World Health Organization, 2020)

Risk factors for COVID-19 appear to include:

- Recent travel from or residence in an area with ongoing community spread of COVID-19 as determined by CDC or WHO
- Close contact (within 6 feet, or 2 meters) with someone who has COVID-19 for more than 5 minutes or being coughed or sneezed on by an infected person

Educational Leadership Responsive Measures in Providing Essential Educational Services in COVID-19 Era

Leadership in Education is seeking to mobilize research in response to the current pandemic (COVID-19) in line with government directives and policies as to attain the educational set goal even in the midst of the global pandemic The few are the various measures, steps taken by educational leadership in responding and providing essential educational services:

Set and Follow a Clear Timetable

Every educational leader emphasized the need of a clear and well-communicated schedule. While it is most important for children, teachers and parents needs to plan as well. With the global pandemic that has come to stay and ha really affected our educational calendar and curriculum, educational leaders try to ensure they come up with a well structure timetable that will aid them in planning and providing educational services in line with the educational goal.

Have a Mix of Planned Activities

Mix planned activities are what educational leader put on the planning for the students to do whilst they are off school. These activities are based on your child's interests, some activities are educational and fun. These activities are to keep the students stimulated and motivated whilst they are on holiday because of the pandemic. As a way of providing essential educational serice, school are now using video conferencing tools like Zoom, the extent of usage varied depending mostly on the quality of access and resources available to students. However, most schools used a variety of tools to try and ensure teaching and learning which includes: online worksheets, teacher recorded videos sent on WhatsApp, assigning videos available on YouTube, getting the students to work in groups and one to one in turn and of course, using EdTech learning programs like Mindspark.

Teacher Skills and Technologies

The teachers skills are the various teaching acts or behaviors intended by the teacher to facilitate students learning directly or indirectly mostly with the use of modern technology. Most teachers were unprepared for a crisis like this so are not well not typically been tech-savvy and many were using a video-conferencing tool in this way for the first time. However, more professional gadgets and even low-tech materials like boards at home or devices for recording for teachers would have helped. At the same time, the school leaders were all praise for all the teachers who learned these new skills enthusiastically through a training and development programmes organized by the educational leaders with the school so that students' learning would not suffer.

Connect with Parents

Parents are playing a dual role in these changed circumstances, therefore, educational leaders ensure to maintain regular positive communication in a variety of ways during this pandemic with parents. Invite parents' to be involved in their child's growth and school success even while the student is off school but at home, and on the one hand, coordinating the schedules of their children and communicating with the school. But even more importantly, they are overseeing the learning since the teachers are not able to do that. Parents now play a critical role by doing what educational leaders was doing earlier, in terms of sharing feedback for the lessons taken by teachers. In general, schools seem to be connecting to parents once a while but this may reduce if the learning routines settle in place.

Provide Psychological Support to the Community

With current global pandemic, everybody was learning and figuring out what works by hit and trial. The sudden changes, uncertainty about the cure and general anxiety over school reopening means that parents and students needs psychological support. Talking regularly, being supportive and gentle and even just planning well and providing dry runs allows everyone to come on board. Educational leaders are putting these new plans in place with emphasized that they would be reviewing them as event unfolds.

Tools Used in Schools Today in COVID-19 Era

Schools seem to be using Zoom the most for videoconferencing though we heard Microsoft Teams mentioned too. Google Classroom was the most popular 'learning management system'. Some schools are using Edmodo which has a few advantages and disadvantages compared to Google Classroom. YouTube both for its existing content and live streaming were mentioned by some schools. Most schools are also using WhatsApp for communications and in some cases, recorded lectures. These are in addition to learning software like Mindspark, of course, which many schools were already using.

Challenges Faced

- Learning the new technologies and the etiquettes associated with using the medium, from home, has been a challenge faced by many teachers and the students.
- Learning management systems are geared more to a system where reading material or worksheets are assigned and need to be completed by students on time. Most schools are still using teacher videos with notes being taken by students from them.
- The current system has increased the load on and expectations from parents – some of whom are already trying to manage changed working requirement.

Some other significant challenges includes, the problem of too much too soon, the expense of technology, inadequate training, technological issues, the need to adapt content for blended learning, decreased motivation, lack of access to technology, poor power supply, and weakened relationships between students and teachers.

Preventive Measures for Schools to Reopen

Although there is no vaccine available to prevent COVID-19, educational leadership and the student can take steps to reduce the risk of infection. WHO and NCDC recommend the following as precautions for avoiding and reducing the spread COVID-19:

- Avoid large events and mass gatherings while in school;
- Avoid close contact (within about 6 feet, or 2 meters) with any student who is sick or has symptoms;
- Stay home as much as possible and keep distance between yourself and others (within about 6 feet, or 2 meters), especially if the student have a higher risk of serious illness. Keep in mind some student may have COVID-19 and spread it to others, even if they do not have symptoms or do not know they have COVID-19;
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol;
- Cover your face with a cloth face mask in public spaces, such as the grocery store, where it's difficult to avoid close contact with others, especially if you are in an area with ongoing community spread. Only use nonmedical cloth masks surgical masks and N95 respirators should be reserved for health care providers;
- Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze, throw away the used tissue and also wash your hands right away;

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth;
- Avoid sharing dishes, glasses, towels, bedding and other household items if you are sick,
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces, such as doorknobs, light switches, electronics and counters, daily;
- Stay home from work, school and public areas if the student is sick, unless student are going to get medical care; and
- Avoid public transportation, taxis and ride-sharing if the student sick.

CONCLUSION

Educational leadership is primarily associated with enhancement of student learning and their growth and development. With the era of COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown of schools globally, educational leadership take proactive steps in providing essential support to schools; sharing resources, instructional systems, teaching-learning methods, usage of modern technology like Zoom, YouTube's, etc.

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