

**THE ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON E-LEARNING: A STUDY OF  
SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN THE SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Globally, the world is faced with the Covid-19 pandemic which has held the economy at ransom not exempting the educational sector. This pandemic has brought about recent changes and disruptions in the educational sector which serves as a catalyst for the development of any nation. Educational sector globally is seen to be shifting towards e-learning in order to cushion the effects of this pandemic. However, the Nigerian system of education is trying to adapt to this 'historic change' amidst its economic and political challenges. The Covid-19 is a pandemic which was beyond any type of natural forecasting, putting the world into a pandemonia sphere of innovation. The education system of the South East section has been used in this work as a case study, the impact of Covid-19 during and after on e-learning. This work tries to bring to bare the inadequacies of the educational system of Nigeria, learning's/teachers and students. It equally evaluate and recommends this new system of learning in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, e-learning, Tertiary Institutions, South-East.

**INTRODUCTION**

Necessity they say is the mother of invention and man in his environment keep striving to make changes full of trial and error in a bid to make himself better and also make his environment habitable. Thus, change becomes an aspect of man due to its constancy since life is full of changes, development and growth towards the betterment of all and sundry directly or indirectly. The constancy of change therefore cannot be over emphasized as it connotes man, the society change which gives a way of attitude or perception of things.

The Corona virus which is popularly known as COVID-19 has disrupted the global educational system as most countries around the world have resulted in temporarily closure of all educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the pandemic. According to the report by UNESCO (2020), the closure of educational institutions has impacted over 91% of the world's student's population.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO (2020) COVID-19 Educational disruption and response Retrieved from:  
<https://en.Unesco.org/covid19/Accessed March 5,2021, 438pm>

The ripple effect of this pandemic has been felt by both the educators and students in primary, secondary, colleges and universities as academic sessions were disrupted after the corona virus was declared a public health emergency. This has left many students and educators in a rude shock as some of these institutions were at the point of preparing for examinations, admitting of new students, beginning of new semester among others. Universities around the world including Africa have resulted in looks for ways adjust to academic changes as a result of this pandemic. This COVID-19 pandemic has shaped a new normal for higher education sector across the globe from transforming the online learning platform, restructuring application processes and stimulating crisis management strategies. This Covid-19 outbreak has opened up the importance of online education and distance learning.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected many sectors of the economy especially in Nigeria. This effect is also evident in the Nigerian educational sector which saw the academic session halted by the Federal Ministry of Education in order to curtail the pandemic in the academic institutions. Although, this decision came so sudden to many educational institutes because of unpreparedness, others saw it as a step in the right direction. The challenge the remains HOW WILL THIS PANDEMIC AFFECT teachers, students and academic calendar. Hence the imminent use of the e-learning as an alternative learning method emerged. Despite, the immense benefits of the E-learning platforms available, not many tertiary institutions have embraced it. Poor budgetary allocation corruption and unpreparedness are contributing factors to the inability of many public tertiary institutions to enhance e-learning during the global Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria.<sup>2</sup>

#### **RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF E-LEARNING BEFORE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Before the pandemic outbreak, the world was enjoying the “freedom of life”. The etiquettes of life were carelessly neglected and violated without qualms of conscience by its inhabitants. Shaking of hands were seen as a traditional and common way of exchanging greetings and love, coughing and sneezing from our biological cognition depicting reflex action and involuntary, commercial commuters carrying four passengers per roll, sitting close to each other in schools, churches and other public gatherings, the traditional face-to-face of learning in school all these within a sawed-off of time became a criminal offence worldwide.

Towards the end of March 2020, as alerts on the increasing spread of the COVID-19, the World Health Organization built up a multi-sectored worldwide taskforce to help nation reaction and adapting measures.<sup>3</sup> At that point, just China and some other influenced nations were upholding social distance through the closure of schools. In the meantime, following fourteen days after the fact, 120 countries closed schools impacting almost a billion students across the world that have experienced closure of their schools for the period(Azzi-Hack and Schims 2020).<sup>4</sup> In this light, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the universities to close face to face education and send students home. This really forced some of our universities to introduce courses through online portals. It equally made some of the education industries to avail technologies like video conferencing platform like Zoom, Microsoft platform and Webex Blackboard and Google classroom. Some of the online platforms used so far include unified communication and collaboration platforms such as Canvas and Blackboard, which allow the teachers to create educational courses, training and skill development programmes (Azhari, 2020).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Azzi-Huck, K&T. Shims. Managing the Impact of COVID19 on education systems around the world,; How countries are preparing, coping and planning for recovery (2020)

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO (2020) COVID-19 Educational disruption and response Retrieved from: <https://en.Unesco.org/covid19/> Accessed March 5,2021,4.38pm

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO (2020) COVID-19 Educational disruption and response Retrieved from: <https://en.Unesco.org/covid19/> Accessed March 5,2021,4.38pm

<sup>5</sup> Azhari, F.A; Ming, L.C (2020): Review of E-learning practice at the tertiary education systems around the world. <http://www.tertiaryeducationsystems/goo...> Accessed march 7,2021. 10.25pm

### **E-LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC**

The outbreak of this pandemic saw the indefinite closing of educational institutes, religious houses, markets, economic institutions etc. this indefinite shutting down of different professions of life was technically referred as “total lockdown”. Hence, it saw the dawn of e-learning our education sectors and tertiary institutions. According to statistics given by International Journal of Research and Innovation in Applied Science (IJRIAS), revealed that since 2010-2019 (a period of ten years) the education sector got an average of 7.24% as against the 15-20% recommended by UNESCO.<sup>6</sup> This definitely will not allow infrastructures such as ICT platforms, electricity, teacher-tutor training among others needed to allow e-learning grow in Nigeria to be available.

However, some universities particularly the private universities in Nigeria have embraced e-learning as a means to ensure that their academic calendar is not totally disturbed. These universities have devised the use of information and communication technological tools to facilitate learning during this pandemic. Some of our private universities seem to be at the forefront of e-learning capacity in Nigerian Universities as a result of that innovative and flexible operation. Regrettably, it appears that most States and Federal government universities have not been able to embrace the e-learning platform to the detriment of their students and the society at large. Consequently, tertiary institutions in the South-eastern part of Nigeria have been used as an assessment of the impact of Covid-19 on e-learning. The selected tertiary institutions include: University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu state, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Federal University of Technology Owerri, Imo State, Abia state University Umuahia, Abia State, Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Ebonyi State. These Universities covers the geopolitical zone of the Southeast.

#### **1. University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu State (UNN)**

Historically, the University is the first University in Nigeria located at Nsukka area of Enugu state. it was funded by Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1955 and formerly opened on 7<sup>th</sup> Oct, 1960. It is regarded as one the five best Universities in the Niger area.<sup>7</sup> According to online statistics, it has an approximated population of 36,000 students, fourteen faculties, 102 academic departments, two schools, three institutes and with 1,700 academic staff.<sup>8</sup>

For many years, this prestigious institution of learning stands out as one of the tertiary who embraced e-learning by parking in activities such as General Studies program courses (GSP), quiz, essay and forum discussions through well detailed and comprehensive series guide courses.

The emergence of Covid-19 pandemic brought a bewildering challenge to this citadel of excellence. According to a final year student of English and Literary Studies in this institution,<sup>9</sup> listed some of the challenges encountered by the school management were epileptic or inconsistent power supply on the lecturers and students, difficulties in the use Worldwide Web (WWW), difficulties in network connection, high cost of digital libraries, high cost of computers, phones and its accessories on the part of the students, massive computer illiteracy on the part of the lecturers and students, poor network connections in the rural areas of the students etc. All these saw to the inability of the e-learning education of this citadel of learning. The assessment buttresses an insinuation that was in total lockdown.

#### **2. Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State (UNIZIK)**

Unizik is named after Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. It was established in 1991. It consists of 2 campuses in Anambra state. Its main campus is located at Nnewi, Agulu and Ifite-Ogwaeri. It is one of the Federal Universities

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<sup>6</sup> Adeoye, I.A, “COVID-19 and E-learning: Nigeria Tertiary Education System Experience”, International Journal of research and Innovation in Applied Science 5,no.5(2020)29.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.UniversityofNsukka.org/view/article/> Accessed March 8, 2021, 12.35am

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.UniversityofNsukka.org/view/article/> Accessed March 8, 2021, 12.51am

<sup>9</sup> Evelyn Agbajeogu, Interviewed by Jane Ani, Uwani-Enugu south federabary 25, 2021

which are overseen and accredited by the National Universities Commission. The University has a population of thirty thousand to thirty-four thousand students with about fourteen facilities and fifty-seven departments.<sup>10</sup>

Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka has a digital library for online resource sharing among the university communities.<sup>11</sup> This depicts the presence of e-learning in the institution. According to a final year student of Economics in the school who gave an information concerning the state of the institution during the Covid-19 pandemic,<sup>12</sup> said that the institution were ready for the e-learning lectures but failed due to unpaid salaries of the lecturers by the Federal Government. Here, there is a big blow on the side of the Federal Government denying its citizens rights to education in different forms. The teachers and students were ready to continue their studies on line but were bridged by the irresponsibility of the Government of the country.

### **3. FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY OWERRI, IMO STATE (FUTO)**

FUTO is a federal government university located in Owerri, Imo state. It is the oldest university of technology in Nigeria and the premier federal university of technology in the Southeast and Southsouth parts of Nigeria. It was established in 1980. Its student body comprises of people from all over West Africa and beyond. It has eight colleges and approximately number of twenty-one thousand students.<sup>13</sup>

Before the Covid-19 pandemic FUTO has e-learning App Harmatan which is an excellent computer based testing and learning application that enable first year student of FUTO prepare effectively for semester examinations.<sup>14</sup> From the afore stated premise of the presence of e-learning, it can be deduced that FUTO has a knowledge of the online studies.

During the pandemic according to a third year student of Industrial chemistry of FUTO,<sup>15</sup> witnessed that there was no attempt of e-learning programs. She further gave reasons of insufficient electricity on the side of the lecturers and students, high cost of data subscription in which some lecturers wanted visual lectures, high cost of smart phones and network connectives and difficulties in the internet applications.

Succinctly, the impact of e-learning during the pandemic on the students was very poor and shameful.

### **4. ABIA STATE UNIVERSITY UTURU, ABIA STATE. (ABSU)**

It was established 1981 by Sam Mbakwe as the governor of Imo sate..Abia Sate University is one of the state owned university in Nigeria. It was dated to expand admissions and bring professional skills, expertise & modern research, facilities close to the city & moral dwellers.<sup>16</sup>

On May 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 Abia State University under the leadership of the vice-Chancellor, Prof. E. Uche Ikonne approved an improved e-learning management system in her efforts to engage the students whole at home. The e-learning was linked to Zoom Inc for more convenient on line lectures & revision. Lecturers started posing & accessing their assignments online. Students will automatically do receive an email inform of text, video or audios while at home.

Consequently, it can be deduced that the e-learning section of this institution was active during the pandemic.

### **5. EBONYI STATE UNIVERSITY (EBSU)**

Base the information gathered from the above institution, there was no sign of e-learning before, during and after the COVID-19. Therefore, no viable assessment from this institute of learning.

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.Umizik.org/view\\_article/Accessed\\_March\\_9](http://www.Umizik.org/view_article/Accessed_March_9), 2021, 11.22am

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.Umizik.org/view\\_article/Accessed\\_March\\_9](http://www.Umizik.org/view_article/Accessed_March_9), 2021, 11.39am

<sup>12</sup> Evelyn Agbajeogu, Interviewed by Sara Ibe, Awada-Onitsha, March 4 2021

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.Federal\\_University\\_of\\_Technology\\_Owerri\\_online\\_learning.org/view\\_article/Accessed\\_March\\_8](http://www.Federal_University_of_Technology_Owerri_online_learning.org/view_article/Accessed_March_8), 2021, 12.45am

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.Federal\\_University\\_of\\_Technology\\_Owerri\\_online\\_learning.org/view\\_article/Accessed\\_March\\_8](http://www.Federal_University_of_Technology_Owerri_online_learning.org/view_article/Accessed_March_8), 2021, 12.55am

<sup>15</sup> Evelyn Agbajeogu, Interviewed by Benedicta Ibe, FUTO-Owerri, March 11 2021

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.en.m.Wikipedia.org/Wiki/Abia-State-University>. Accessed March 22,2021 12.17pm

### **CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF E-LEARNING OF THE ASSESSED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN THE SOUTH EAST**

Though the challenges are absorbed from a general perspective since what is obtainable in one side is also what is experienced at another end, thus the experiences and encounters however posit that these tertiary institutions had the same projection. Challenges are inevitable when it comes to experience, moreover with the first experience, with the imposed closure of schools attendance to lectures was no longer an option, thus the e-learning had an edge over every other format. Due to the sudden use of the online lectures and studies, students were faced with setbacks. And encounter ranging from lack of adequate training from their lecturers and challenges in terms of accessing the online lessons as most of them are not technically oriented. These challenges are further considered from these perspectives.

### **POOR ELECTRIC POWER SUPPLY**

Epileptic power supply is practically and convincingly seen as one of the basic characteristics of the holding sector of the country. Since power supply for a whole day is not assured or cannot be ascertained in the urban areas talk more of the rural areas Electricity therefore becomes strictly for anyone who can possibly foot the bills of fuelling his generator in order to supply high energy.

### **PROBLEMS WITH SLOW LEARNERS**

The slow learners also contribute to the challenges encounter in the vice of the E-learning, since there is no direct contact between the lecturers and the students, the confidence, interest, zeal might no longer be there, thus the slow learners finds it so difficult to comprehend easily since they do not have the lecturer bodily present.

### **SKYROCKETED POVERTY RATE IN THE NATION**

It is also necessary we face the hard truth and admit that not all the lecturers, teachers or student have all or what it takes to access the internet providers (Wi-Fi). Especially those in the rural parts are faced with the problems of both requiring an internet provider and also at least having money for the monthly, daily or weekly subscription of these providers.

Families who cannot feed or get three square meals per day cannot be expected to buy mobile and android/smart phones, laptops and other gadgets for their wards to enhance them participating actively in the online learning.

### **TIME CONSUMING AND ENERGY SAPPING**

Time is spent in the cause of the online lecture or teaching with energy sapped-starting from the rigorous processes of connecting to the online content of these channels.

### **LACK OF TECHNICAL KNOWN-HOW ON THE PARTS OF THE STUDENTS AND LECTURERS**

The technical known-how goes to a long way into providing us with the basics and necessities of every step made; but due to the sudden eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, the students and lecturers had little or no idea in the technical handling of these gadgets. Therefore, this posed a known-how and are not technically oriented, the trained and computer literates among the lecturers started selling the online course of their lectures.

### **NON CONDUCTIVE ATMOSPHERE/ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING AT HOME**

Due to the lock down as almost every family had themselves locked up at home, things became difficult, as the atmosphere became charged and tensed towards distractions, noise making of all sorts. With the atmosphere not conducive, the surrounding hindered an enrolled academic growth or performance from the students.

### **LIMITED ATTRIBUTES OF THE E-LEARNING IN THE INSTITUTIONS IN THE SOUTH EAST**

The Enugu State University of Science and technology, Enugu State matriculated their students online on 15th of January 2021.

As schools have been closed to cope with the global pandemic, students, parents and educators around the globe have felt the unexpected ripple effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. While governments, frontline workers and health officials are doing their best slowly down the outbreak, education systems are trying to continue imparting quality education for all during these difficult times. Many students at home/living space have undergone psychological and home schooling are yet to be explored (Petrie, 2020).

The use of suitable and relevant pedagogy for online education may depend on the expertise and exposure to information and communications technology (ICT) for both educators and the learners.

They include options of workplace chat, video meeting and file storage that keep classes organized and easy to work. They usually support the sharing of a variety of content like Word, PDF, Excel file, audio, videos and many more. These also allow the tracking of student learning and assessment by using quizzes and the rubric-based assessment of submitted assignments. Lectures thus became handy anytime, anywhere since everyone was to be at home, opportunities located the students in order not to be too idle for long. It therefore gave way and took for technological development and known-how.

Time management and allocation became very essential and paramount; the E-learning ensured and encouraged students' learning to do certain works for themselves especially in further research works without sticking to the limitations of the lectures.

### **POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 THROUGH E-LEARNING**

Transitioning from traditional face-to-face learning to online learning can be an entirely different experience for the learners and the educators, which they must adapt to with little or no other alternatives available. The education system and the educators have adopted "Education in Emergency" through various online platforms and are compelled to adopt a system that they are not prepared for.

E-learning tools have played a crucial role during this pandemic, helping schools and universities facilities student learning during the closure of universities and schools.

The Electronic learning in order words known as E-learning can be defined as that learning which makes use in its fullness the use of information and communication Technologies (ICTs). The emergence of Technology therefore brought an immediate and profound growth in the education system of Nigeria, unfortunately most of the Nigerian institutions are yet to fully incorporate, embrace and implement this fast growing system.

The Electronic Learning is also seen as a learning process which is carried out through the internet, implying the subjection of physical classrooms, and even the presence of the students and their lecturers. It therefore permits only communication between the lecturers and their students.

With the immediate closure of schools with hope that things will get normal in weeks, lo and behold our thoughts were far from the unknown lying against all odds. A lecture which is one of the paramount tools in education that enhances and ensures awareness in the day to day activities of the academic activities became a fiddle because of the difficulties to commerce lecturers. The pandemic left most teachers and lecturers unpaid, making it difficult for them to take care of fend for their families.

## CONCLUSION

Admitting to the English saying that “necessity is the mother invention” one would quickly appreciate the E learning modus operandi. The catastrophic impact of the corona pandemic out the possibilities in man to make the world which we inhabit a better place. Though not easy especially in our actual, political settings, youths in the Tertiary institution got a big blow which possibly held all at reason into bracing up in flowing with the current in order not to be left out academically, socially and otherwise.

The posing challenges in every way surpass the advantages experienced and encounter so far, it therefore becomes an eye opener for all and especially towards the governmental body to strive, especially by lift the youths who are the future of tomorrow. Therefore, this paper recommends that a well-planned, customized design should be made available to enhance the online teaching.

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