

IMPACT OF CORONA VIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID 19) PANDEMIC ON MANAGEMENT OF STATE UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH CENTRAL, NIGERIA

BY

DR AKUTA NGODOO

**Department of Educational Foundations,
Benue State University, Makurdi.
ngodooakuta@gmail.com
07032635416**

DUENYA JAMES

**Department of Educational Foundations,
Benue State University, Makurdi.
jduenya@bsum.edu.ng
08106439026**

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Abstract

This study investigated the Impact of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic on Management of State Universities in North Central, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested. Cross-sectional research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 13,225 academic staff of six State Universities in North Central, Nigeria. Sample of 661 academic staff were used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a self-designed questionnaire titled COVID-2019 Pandemic and Management of State Universities Questionnaire (CPMSUQ) was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while chi-square was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicated that COVID-19 pandemic has significant impact on management of teaching and learning in Public Universities, this is the main reason for education, as there can never be a school without teachers to teach and learners to learn, COVID-19 pandemic also has significant impact on management of staff training in state universities in North Central, Nigeria. It was recommended among others that State Universities should encourage on-the-job training of staff to be a thing of priority by sponsoring staff on conferences, workshops and seminars which is the yardstick for education at the tertiary education system.

Key Words: COVID-19, Management of State Universities, Teaching/ learning, Staff Training.

Introduction

Management of university education is the control by the federal government through the National Universities Commission (NUC), which is a body charged with the coordination of university management in the country (NUC 2020). Management of University education help universities to be a crucial national assets in addressing many policy priorities, and as sources of new knowledge and innovative thinking; providers of skilled personnel and credible credentials; contributors to

innovation; attractors of international talent and business investment; agents of social justice and mobility; contributors to social and cultural vitality; and determinants of health and well-being. University is a place for preparation of complexities of a world that needs rigorous analyses of its problems and synthetic approaches to solving them. Thus, without the skills from the university, the society may likely fail to exploit new intellectual capital and is unable to make decisive decisions. The university therefore is a place where concepts hallowed by age and traditions are subjected to severe scrutiny and knowledge grows through dissent, not through compromise. According to the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2016), the purpose of the university education is to contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training, develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society, acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society, promote and encourage scholarship and common services, forge and cement national unity and promote national and international understanding and interactions.

Despite the immense benefits of university education to nation building, the potentials of university system in developing countries to fulfil these responsibilities is frequently thwarted by long-standing problems bedevilling the system. University education in North Central Nigeria is in travail, the system is riddled with crises of various dimensions and magnitude. A number of multi-faceted problems have inhibited goal attainment and are raising questions, doubts and fears, one of which is the COVID-19 pandemic that has seemed to have great impact on management of state universities in North Central Nigeria. COVID-19 pandemic has left the universities with immediate and long term challenges which form the variables for this research work, particularly in the areas of management of teaching/ learning opportunities and staff training (Igwe & Chadwick, 2020).

Teaching and learning have been affected by the COVID-19 related crisis in most direct ways. This is primarily due to the absence of options for face-to-face interactions for an extended period. Some countries and states initially closed education process at universities for a short break only. For example, early holidays were announced in the FCT. An additional one week of vacation took place in Plateau state, other states in North Central and Nigeria at large. Benue announced a longer holiday break to be able to prepare universities for distance learning. However, after understanding that the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine measures would last for months, the learning process continued in a distance mode using online technologies. Most countries have moved to online learning at the university level, nowadays with only a few exceptions due to a specific political environment that has resulted in a “business-as-usual” approach (Belarus & Tajikistan 2020). However, the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria seemed to still be in the dark for universities to develop a mechanism of securing distance teaching/ learning.

Staff training is any learning activity organised or sponsored by university. Bua and Ada (2018) define staff training as the method used to give old and new staff of educational organizations the skills and knowledge they need to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently. It is directed towards future needs rather than present needs and is concerned more with career growth than immediate performance of a staff. Egwuyega (2020) opines that staff training is an opportunity given to teachers to improve their performances which eventually impacts the quality of students they produce but COVID-19 pandemic generally affected staff training in universities. For example, staffs were to attend workshops, conferences and seminars or those who were to travel abroad for studies did not because universities were closed down. Staffs were also unable to get sponsorship from their universities to update their knowledge. During this period, lecturers were delayed in obtaining Master and Ph.D degrees for those undertaking their postgraduate studies (Eric, 2019). Eric (2019) and Egwuyega (2020) observes that when teachers do not have the opportunity to improve their performances, it can lead to decreased knowledge, skills, students performance, workers' morale, turnover rate among workers and employee chances for promotion.

Statement of the Problem

Education at the tertiary level is hinged on teaching/ learning, research/ publication and staff welfare including training for constructive knowledge of the economy and society in all nations. What makes a university unique is the special service it provides for its immediate community, such specialized services are derived from the results of research it conducts, but COVID-19 Pandemic left the

education sector in a state of dilemma, preventing the normal activities of the school system (teaching/ learning and staff training) not to thrive. Management is faced with certain challenges such as disruption in teaching/ learning (academic calendar), cost of training staff with regards to the use of e-learning tools, funding uncertainties, staff welfare, sponsoring of research and publications, boosting of workforce, provision of adequate lecture halls to allow the students seat 2 metres apart, provision of enough hand sanitizers and face mask for each student in the university. Also the pandemic seem to be affecting teaching and learning as families and communities have to combine health and work crises and are not able to provide supports at homes, it has reduced instructional and learning time which is known to impede student performance, with disparate impacts on different groups of students. Therefore, it is critical that the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the management of State Universities in North Central Nigeria be investigated.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. In what ways does COVID-19 pandemic impact on management of teaching/ learning in State Universities?
2. What impact does COVID-19 pandemic have on management of staff training in State Universities?

Hypotheses

1. COVID-19 pandemic has no significant impact on management of teaching/ learning in State Universities.
2. COVID-19 pandemic has no significant impact on management of staff training in State Universities.

Methodology

Cross- sectional research design was adopted for this study. The researchers' choice of the design was because of the suitability to the study, data was collected from many different individuals at a single time (academic staff from three different universities). The population of the study comprises of 13,225 academic staff of the six State Universities in North Central Nigeria (National Universities Commission, 2020). The choice of the State Universities was that the population of all the universities both public and private in North Central Nigeria put together will be large in size. Therefore, small sample sizes permit inferences for generalization (Ada, 2010). A simple random sampling was used in order to avoid bias and to ensure that each respondent had an equal chance of being selected. Three States- Benue, Kogi and Nasarawa were purposively selected with a total of 7518. The choice of the sampled States depended on the researchers' discretion of the States. The sample size for the study comprised 661 academic staff representing 5% from three state universities in North Central Nigeria. On the other hand, proportionate random sampling was used in selecting respondents proportionate to the size of the population of the study. Given that the population of the study is in strata (three states) random samples were taken from each stratum (State). In order to distribute the figures fairly among the three selected universities, the formulae of Ngazi (2010) proportional random sampling was used to select 661 academic staff.

$$\frac{\text{Respondent's population per school}}{\text{Total Population of Sampled Schools}} \times \frac{\text{Sample Size}}{1}$$

The research instrument that was used for data collection was self- designed questionnaire titled COVID-19 Pandemic and Management of State Universities Questionnaire (CPMSUQ). The instrument was divided into two sections A and B. Section A is bio- data of the respondents while section B elicits responses on the variables of the study from the respondents. Section B is structured to reflect two clusters based on the various components or variables of the study namely teaching/ learning and staff training. A 4- point rating scale with the response mode of Strongly Agreed (SA) =4 points, Agreed (A) =3, Disagreed (D) =2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) =1 point respectively was

used to weigh the responses. The data collected was analyzed to determine the reliability and internal consistency of the instrument for data collection using Cronbach Alpha. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. A cut- off point of 2.00 was used for decision making. Any mean score of 2.00 and above was accepted as having the desired impact. On the other hand, mean score of less than 2.00 was not accepted as having the desired impact. Chi- square was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Chi- square is a two-tailed test which indicates whether or not a set of observed frequencies differ significantly from the corresponding set of expected frequencies. In taking decisions, the calculated chi (χ^2) degrees of freedom. If the calculated value of (χ^2) degrees was compared with the critical (table) value chi (χ^2) exceeds the critical value, then the null hypothesis was rejected, otherwise, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Data Presentation

Research Question 1: What ways does COVID-19 pandemic impact on management of teaching/ learning in State Universities?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of the Impact of COVID 19 Pandemic on Management of Teaching and Learning in State Universities

s/n	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	sd	Remark
o	N=621							s
1	The lockdown has enhanced effective teaching and learning in state universities through e-learning platforms.	87	168	188	178	2.26	1.02	Disagree
2	COVID-19 pandemic assisted in provision of instructional materials for teaching and learning.	89	173	188	171	2.29	1.02	Disagree
3	During COVID-19 pandemic, there was shortage of teaching and learning facilities as educational funds were withheld.	276	159	96	90	3.00	1.09	Agree
4	COVID 19 pandemic has brought about poor academic performances in state universities due to lockdown.	188	333	70	30	3.09	.78	Agree
5	The closure of schools as a result of COVID-19 pandemic has no effect on coverage of courses online in state universities.	81	168	206	166	2.26	1.00	Disagree
6	Student graduation rate has been seriously affected in the universities as a result of lockdown arising from COVID- 19 Pandemic.	184	290	93	54	2.97	.89	Agree
Mean and Standard Deviation						2.65		Agree

Table 1 shows mean and standard deviation scores of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on management of teaching and learning in State Universities. The result of item 1, 2 and 3 have mean scores of 2.26, 2.29, 2.26 less than 2.00 and was considered not accepted while item 4 and 5 have mean scores of 3.00 and 3.09 above criterion mean of 2.00 with item 1-6 standard deviation scores of 1.02, 1.02, 1.09, 0.78, 1.00, 0.89 and cluster of 0.97 respectively. Item by item interpretation reveals that respondents disagrees with the statement that COVID-19 lockdown has enhanced effective teaching and learning in state universities through e-learning platforms similarly to item 3 respondents disagrees that COVID-19 pandemic assisted in provision of instructional materials for teaching and learning, while accepted that during COVID-19 pandemic, there was shortage of teaching and learning facilities as educational funds were withheld. Furthermore, respondents suggested that COVID-19 pandemic has brought about poor academic performances in state universities due to lockdown because universities were closed as a result of COVID-19 pandemic therefore has negatively affect the coverage of courses online in state universities and student graduation rate has been seriously affected in the universities as a result of lockdown arising from COVID-19 Pandemic.

Research Question 2: What impact does COVID-19 pandemic has on management of staff training in State Universities?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of the Impact of COVID 19 Pandemic on Management of Staff Training in State Universities

s/n	Item Description	N=621	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	sd	Remarks
7	Staff was not sponsored to attend workshops to improve on their academic qualifications due to COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.	109	31	10	4	92	2.71	.92	Agree
8	State universities were still sponsoring their staff for conferences overseas for further development during the COVID-19 pandemic.	93	20	2	23	92	2.48	.92	Disagree
9	Organizing seminars for staff by state universities was not put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.	79	16	8	19	180	2.24	1.01	Disagree
10	State universities enabled their staff for seminar programmes during COVID-19 Pandemic lockdown.	81	17	4	18	178	2.25	1.01	Disagree
11	Funds were raised for staff to go for conferences as part of the requirements for universities promotions due to COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.	81	16	8	18	184	2.24	1.02	Disagree
12	Staff trainings were put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic.	203	27	1	78	69	2.98	.95	Agree
Mean and Standard Deviation							2.48		Disagree

Table 3 shows mean and standard deviation scores of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on management of staff training in state universities. The result of item 7-12 mean scores of 2.71, 2.48, 2.24, 2.25, 2.24, 2.98 and cluster of 2.48 less than the criterion mean of 2.00 with correspondence standard deviation scores of 0.92, 0.92, 1.01, 1.01, 1.02, 0.95 and 0.97 respectively. Respondents further reiterated that staff were not sponsored to attend workshops to improve on their academic qualifications due to COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, respondents mean score of 2.48 indicating that state universities were not sponsoring their staff for conferences overseas for further development during the COVID-19 pandemic, item 9 respondents disagrees that opinion that state universities was not sponsoring seminar to staff during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown while item 10 similarly disagrees that state universities enabled their staff for seminar programmes during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and item 11 respondents stated that funds were not raised for staff to go for conferences as part of the requirements for universities promotions due to COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and while staff trainings were put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hypothesis 1: COVID-19 pandemic has no significant impact on management of teaching and learning in state universities.

Table 3: Chi-Square Analysis of the Significant Impact of COVID-19 on Management of Teaching and Learning in State Universities

Responses	Fo	Fe	df	χ^2 Cal.	p-value	Remark
SA	151	155.3	3	144.04 ^a	0.00	Sign.
A	215	155.3				
D	140	155.3				
SD	115	155.3				
Total	621					

Table 3 shows chi-square analysis of the significant impact of COVID-19 on management of teaching and learning in State Universities in North Central Nigeria. The result reveals that the χ^2 [df=3]=144.04, $0.05 > p=0.00$. This means that the null hypothesis of no significant was rejected because the probability value (0.00) was less than alpha level of significant (0.05). Therefore the result implies that COVID-19 pandemic have significant impact on management of teaching and learning in State Universities in North Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: COVID-19 pandemic has no significant impact on management of staff training in state universities.

Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis of the Significant Impact of COVID-19 on Management of Staff Training in State Universities

Responses	Fo	Fe	df	χ^2 Cal.	p-value	Remark
SA	108	155.3	3	48.02 ^a	0.00	Sign.
A	217	155.3				
D	164	155.3				
SD	132	155.3				
Total	621					

Table 4 shows chi-square analysis of the significant impact of COVID-19 on management of staff training in State Universities in North Central Nigeria. The result reveals that the χ^2 [df=3]=48.02, $0.05 > p=0.00$. This means that the null hypothesis of no significant was rejected because the probability value (0.00) was less than alpha level of significant (0.05). Therefore the result implies that COVID-19 pandemic have significant impact on management of staff training in State Universities in North Central Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The first study revealed that COVID-19 pandemic have significant impact on management of teaching and learning in State Universities in North Central Nigeria [χ^2 (df=3)=144.04, $0.05 > p=0.00$]. There was shortage of teaching and learning facilities to meet the needs of the present situation, educational funds were not provided because government was doing everything in their powers to handle the problem at hand, and these had a significant effect on student's graduation. This is in consonance with Yusuf (2020) who concluded that academic performance has significant effect on teaching and learning in Universities in Taraba State.

The Second study's result revealed that COVID-19 pandemic has significant impact on management of staff training in State Universities in North Central Nigeria [χ^2 (df=3)=48.02, $0.05 > p=0.00$]. University staffs were not given opportunities to go for conferences/seminar to improve on their qualifications and job performances. The result agreed with Ode (2021) showing that COVID-19 Pandemic significantly impacted on staff training and staff job performances in tertiary institutions in Zone C Senatorial District of Benue State. In contrast, Ozurumba (2021) revealed that relationship exists between pandemics, strikes and staff training and development in terms of attending conferences, seminars, workshops, on-the-job training and symposiums in educational institutions.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it has been empirically established that COVID-19 has great impact on management of teaching/ learning and staff training in public universities in North Central, Nigeria. The study also concluded that management of teaching/ learning and staff training were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic causing serious setback to universities running their programmes successfully on the part of teachers and students thereby having a significant impact on management of public universities in North Central, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

1. State Universities should provide effective teaching and e-learning gadgets to be made easy to teachers and students.
2. State Universities should encourage on-the- job training of staff to be a thing of priority by sponsoring staff on conferences, workshops and seminars.

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