

EDUCATION IN TIMES OF CRISES: DEVELOPING POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION IN KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA

¹Hammed I. Adeyanju Ph.D

²Olubunmi A. Kazeem

**¹Department of Science and Vocational Studies
Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina, Nigeria
Phone: 08034107240, adeyanjuhi@tasued.edu.ng**

**²Department of Educational Management
University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria
Phone: 08057061183, olukazeem@unilag.edu.ng**

Abstract

A crisis will always leave its impact on education in one way or another. Whether in the form of natural disasters such as pandemic, epidemic and flooding, or armed conflicts, banditry among others, children's right to education is threatened during emergency situations which drastically affect school enrolment. All these have great consequences on the economy of Katsina State, which worsen the capacity of the state to effectively fund primary education. Primary education in northern Nigeria is encumbered with numerous problems that include among others poor access, gender disparity, dropouts, diseases, banditry, displacement and low quality teaching and learning. Combined with these existing problems, educating the vulnerable children of the poor in the northern communities especially during COVID-19 has become a herculean task for all stakeholders. The study population comprised primary school-age children, school officials, parents, LGEA officials and community leaders in Katsina State. The samples for this study were selected using the multi-stage random sampling approach. The research instruments for this study are survey questionnaire and interviews. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The results identified groups of students who were at risk of dropping out of primary school during crises, which could help in increasing the number of school leavers in Katsina State. Also, the results delineated policy measures for school operations during crises. It also models a framework for development of primary school education in Katsina. It was recommended among others that educational administrators must articulate the required policy framework and provide necessary infrastructure to aid education in times of crises.

Key Words: Education, Crisis, Developing Policy Framework, Primary Education.

INTRODUCTION

A crisis will always leave its impact on education in one way or another. Whether in the form of natural disasters such as pandemics, epidemics, flooding and cyclones, or armed conflicts, children's right to education is threatened during emergency situations. Children in the Northern Nigeria are most vulnerable to such situations. According to UNICEF, 36% of the world's 59.3 million out-of-school children live in countries affected by war and violence. It is also noteworthy that each year, 100 million children and young people are affected by

natural disasters that prevent them from pursuing education. In most countries, the first choice of location for makeshift refugee camps during disasters or situations of war and conflict is schools.

In Northern Nigeria, people often live in dependency, fear and resignation, with almost no hope for a better future; they live in ignorance, poverty, conflicts, diseases, and in isolated small villages with no infrastructural or social amenities. Women are, in many instances, the poorest; they work harder but, on the average, have no say in the society. Still, government programmes hardly reach the people living in remote, isolated villages. However, in the current context of increasing incidences of natural disasters and armed conflicts, innocent children suffer the most and their universal right to education becomes increasingly jeopardized.

Children need education more during national crises and health emergencies. Education can help children deal better with the ordeals they are faced with in times of hardship. It has been noted that schools can provide children with the stability, structure and routine they need in order to cope with loss, fear, stress and violence during and after crises. In addition, education empowers children by providing them with the wisdom necessary to protect themselves by identifying signs of forthcoming disasters.

Quality education is most at risk during times of conflict or crisis. The new global education agenda (Education 2030) puts strong emphasis on this reality and urges countries to implement policies and strategies to ensure that the right to quality education is delivered no matter the circumstances. This is especially important as one in three of the 124 million out-of-school children live in a fragile or conflict-affected country (O'Brien, 2011).

The Collins English Dictionary (2012) defined crisis as crucial stage or turning point in the course of something, especially in a sequence of events or a disease; an unstable period, especially one of extreme trouble or danger in politics, economy, etc.; and as sudden changes, for better or worse, in the course of a disease. Education in Nigeria has witnessed a number of crises. The basic and the secondary levels have failed to lay solid foundations for the tertiary level (Omebe & Omebe, 2015). The crisis of education in Nigeria in reference to any country must be considered a cause for serious concern because of the great value attached to education worldwide. It is widely acknowledged that education has social, economic, political, and security benefits for an individual, for a society and for a country. Education in almost everywhere is considered as the key to economic prosperity and a vital instrument for combating disease, tackling poverty, and supporting sustainable development.

Statement of the Problem

Primary education in Northern Nigeria is confronted by numerous problems that include among others poor access, gender disparity, dropouts, epidemic/diseases, banditry, displacement and low quality teaching and learning. Combined with these existing problems, educating the children of the poor in the mainly Muslim northern communities during crisis has become a herculean task for individuals, non-governmental organisations and governments. There is the problem of identifying children most in need of formal education, soliciting parental support and the problem of finding a common place of learning for the most vulnerable and marginalized children such as the children of the migrant fishermen, herders' group, special children, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and *Almajirai*. The situation of these problems is compounded during COVID-19 pandemic as some of the only alternative means for continuous education (such as the use of ICTs) is mostly unavailable to these sets of children in the society. Hence, this study sought to examine crises plaguing primary education in Katsina State with a view to developing a policy framework to address the attendant challenges.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to examine crises plaguing primary education in Katsina State with a view to devising a policy framework for education delivery for those children who have come through the crises. The specific objectives were to:

- (1) identify the categories of children whose primary school education were affected by crises.
- (2) identify strategies for primary school operations and students' learning and teaching during crises and other emergency situations in the future.

Research Questions

The study provided answers to the following questions:

1. What are the categories of children in primary schools affected by crises?
2. What strategies safeguard primary school operations during crises in Katsina State?

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the crisis intervention theory developed during the mid-1960s based on Caplan's research into community mental health, and the experience of individuals

with acute mental health problems. Crisis intervention theory is a model of practice that describes the impact of crises on people, and offers a helpful framework for professionals working with people in crisis (Pierson & Thomas, 2002). This theory will be of immense benefit as it helps to describe the impact of crisis under study on people and offer a helping solution.

Research Methodology

This research utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. The population comprised primary school-age children, school officials (including the headmasters, headmistresses and their deputies, heads of departments, and teachers), parents, and community leaders in Katsina State. The samples for this study were selected using the multi-stage random sampling approach. The research instruments for this study are survey questionnaire and interviews from respondents. The collected data were analysed with descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

Results and Discussion

Categories of Children Affected by Crisis in Primary Schools

Table 1

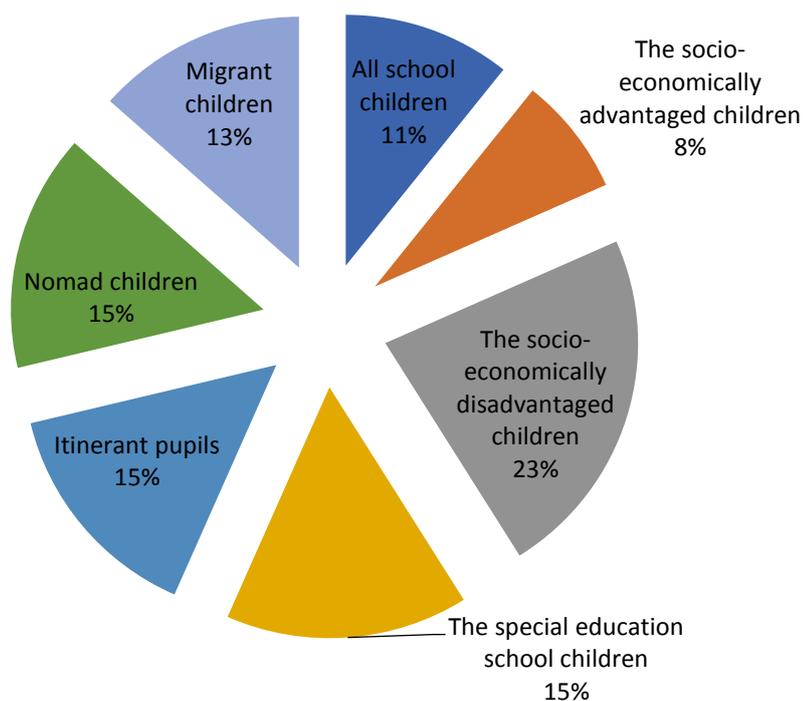
Categories of School Children Affected by COVID-19 pandemic in Katsina State (N=821)

	Frequency	Percentage
All school children	305	37.1
The socio-economically advantaged children	217	26.4
The socio-economically disadvantaged children	645	78.6
The special education school children	441	53.7
Itinerant (<i>Almajirai</i>) pupils	416	50.7
Nomad children	434	52.9
Migrant fishermen children	382	46.5

Results presented on table 1 indicated that all categories of children had their education susceptible to crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the most affected group of pupils was the socio-economically disadvantaged children. This set of school children were identified by the respondents (primary school-age children, school officials including the headmasters, headmistress and their deputies, heads of departments, and teachers, parents, and community leaders in Katsina State) as those cared for by parents or guardians experiencing parental unemployment, low wages and income, housing instability or other socio-economic constraints. Apart from the socio-economically disadvantaged children, the special education

school children were also affected educationally during crises. More than half of the respondents revealed that special education school children such as the deaf, the blind, and the mentally retarded individuals were educationally restrained. Beneficiaries of nomadic education were also identified by the respondents as another category of pupils affected in times of crises such as the global COVID-19 pandemic, followed by itinerant pupils and then by migrant children. The respondents identified that the socio-economically advantaged children were the least affected. These results are further illustrated with Figure 1.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents identifying the categories of school children mostly affected by COVID-19 pandemic crisis in Katsina state, Nigeria



Safeguarding Strategies for Primary School Operations During Crises

Instructional Delivery Strategy

Table 2

Thematic Analysis of Instructional Deliveries to School Children During COVID-19 Crisis in Katsina State (n=105)

	Themes and Sub-Themes	Frequency	Percentage
All school children	Provide online teaching materials and resources. Encourage remote/online learning (e.g. Google Drive/Microsoft Teams). The State Ministry has launched tools for online education.	45	42.9
The socio-economically advantaged children	Provide online teaching materials and resources. Encourage remote/online learning (e.g. Google Drive/Microsoft Teams). The school organizes teachers of various subjects to conduct online teaching. Creation of virtual classrooms by Education Management Information System. Teaching shifted to individualized digital material.	28	26.7
The socio-economically disadvantaged children	Educational programmes are being broadcast on national television.	16	15.2
The special education school children	Educational programmes are being broadcast on national television. TV lessons were broadcasted.	12	11.4
Itinerant pupils	Local Education Boards supported children home and supplementary lessons. Schools established remote contacts with pupils.	31	29.5
Nomad children	A pedagogical continuity is put in place to maintain regular contact between the student and their teachers.	24	22.8
Migrant children	TV lessons were broadcasted.	18	17.1

Respondents (primary school-age children, headmasters, headmistress and their deputies, heads of departments, and teachers in Katsina State) were asked to identify the instructional delivery strategies employed in their domains during COVID-19 pandemic crisis, only 42.9% ($n=45$) of the respondents revealed that all school children were provided online teaching materials and resources, remote/online learning (e.g. Google Drive/Microsoft Teams), and tools for online education (table 2). Of the respondents, 26.7% ($n=28$) revealed that the

socio-economically advantaged children were provided online teaching materials and resources, remote/online learning tools (e.g. Google Drive/Microsoft Teams), organized teachers of various subjects to conduct online teaching, virtual classrooms by Education Management Information System, and individualized digital material. 15.2% ($n=16$) of the respondents indicated that the socio-economically disadvantaged children were only delivered educational programmes through television broadcast on national TV station. Two instructional delivery strategies were dedicated for special education school children. The respondents (11.4%, $n= 12$) revealed that national television station broadcast and TV lessons were the major strategies render to this class of school children. For itinerant pupils, instructional deliveries were through local education boards supported lessons, and remote contacting with pupils (29.5%, $n= 31$). For children of the nomads, instructional deliveries were through regular contacts between the pupils and their teachers (22.8%, $n= 24$). For children of the migrant fishermen, instructional delivery was only conducted through broadcast TV lessons (17.1%, $n= 18$).

Curriculum and Resource Strategy

Table 3

Thematic Analysis of Curriculum and Resource Strategy Delivered to Primary Schools During COVID-19 Crisis in Katsina State (n=235)

Themes	Sub-Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Area of Curriculum Prioritization	No curriculum prioritization.	235	100.0
Instructional Resources Deployed to Schools	Online platforms and websites. National and state television and radio stations.	41	17.4
School resources for teacher professional development	Individualized remote learning. Programme updates from local and state authorities.	14	6.0

Respondents (school officials including the headmasters, headmistress and their deputies, heads of departments, and teachers in Katsina State) were asked to identify the curriculum and resources deployed to their schools for continuing education during COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Results on table 3 showed that no special curriculum was prioritized for all primary school pupils in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. However, instructional resources deployed to schools were online platforms and websites, and national/state television/radio station broadcasts (17.4%, $n= 41$). With regards to school resources for teacher professional development, individualized remote learning, and programme updates from local and state authorities were deployed.

Determination of School Needs and Assessments

Table 4

Thematic Analysis of School Needs Assessments During COVID-19 Crisis in Katsina State (n=235)

Categories of Pupils	Themes and Sub-Themes	Frequency	Percentage
All school children	Ensure the continuity of academic learning for pupils.	66	28.1
The socio-economically advantaged children	Ensure distribution of food to pupils.	71	30.2
	Ensure the continuity of academic learning for pupils.		
The socio-economically disadvantaged children	Provide professional support, advice to teachers.	13	5.5
	Ensure well-being of teachers.		
The special education school children	Ensure support for parents and caregivers.	19	8.1
	Ensure well-being of teachers.		
Itinerant pupils	Support pupils who lack skills for independent study.	0	0.0
	No assessments of school needs determined		
Nomad children	No assessments of school needs determined	0	0.0
	No assessments of school needs determined		
Migrant children	No assessments of school needs determined	0	0.0

Respondents (school officials including the headmasters, headmistress and their deputies, heads of departments, and teachers in Katsina State) were asked to assess and identify the school needs during COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Results on table 4 showed that all pupils in schools were ensured to have continuity of academic learning, and distribution of foods (28.1%, $n=66$). For socio-economically advantaged children, respondents revealed that needs assessments extend to ensure the continuity of academic learning for pupils, provide professional support, advice to teachers and ensure well-being of teachers (30.2%, $n=71$). For socio-economically disadvantaged children, respondents revealed that needs assessments extend to ensure support for parents and caregivers (5.5%, $n=13$). For special education school children, respondents revealed that needs assessments extend to ensure well-being of teachers, and to support pupils who lack skills for independent study (8.1%, $n=19$). For itinerant pupils, nomad pupils and migrant children, no assessment of school needs were determined during COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

Challenging Implementation Areas

Table 5

Thematic Analysis of Challenges of Implementation Areas During COVID-19 Crisis in Katsina State (n=235)

Categories of Pupils	Themes and Sub-Themes	Frequency	Percentage
All school children	Availability of technological infrastructure. Addressing students' emotional health. Achieving the right balance between digital and screen-free activities. Lack of availability of parents/guardians to support learning at home. Management of technological infrastructure. Lack of adequate communication with parents to coordinate curriculum aligned learning. Lack of capacity or willingness of teachers to adapt to the changes required by the situation.	207	88.1
The socio-economically advantaged children	Addressing pupils' emotional health.	39	16.6
The socio-economically disadvantaged children	Lack of capacity or willingness of teachers to adapt to the changes required by the situation.	50	21.3
The special education school children	Management of technological infrastructure. Lack of capacity or willingness of teachers to adapt to the changes required by the situation.	36	15.3
Itinerant pupils	Unavailability of parents/guardians to support learning at home. Lack of adequate communication with parents to coordinate curriculum aligned learning.	21	8.9
Nomad children	Unavailability of parents/guardians to support learning at home. Lack of adequate communication with parents to coordinate curriculum aligned learning.	27	11.5
Migrant children	Unavailability of parents/guardians to support learning at home. Lack of adequate communication with parents to coordinate curriculum aligned learning.	18	7.7

Table 5 identified the challenges of implementation areas for continuing education in time of crisis in Katsina State. The respondents (88.1%, $n=207$) revealed that for all school children, availability of technological infrastructure, addressing students emotional health, achieving the right balance between digital and screen-free activities, unavailability of parents/guardians to support learning at home, management of technological infrastructure, lack of adequate communication with parents to coordinate curriculum aligned learning, and lack of capacity or willingness of teachers to adapt to the changes required by the situation were the major challenging implementation areas in all schools. For socio-economically advantaged children, respondents (16.6%, $n=39$) revealed that addressing pupils' emotional health was the only challenging implementation area in the school. For socio-economically disadvantaged children, respondents (21.3%, $n=50$) revealed that lack of capacity or willingness of teachers to adapt to the changes required by the situation as the only challenging implementation area in the school. For special education school children, respondents (15.3%, $n=36$) revealed that management of technological infrastructure, and lack of capacity or willingness of teachers to adapt to the changes required by the situation were the major challenging implementation areas in schools. For itinerant pupils, respondents (8.9%, $n=21$) revealed that unavailability of parents/guardians to support learning at home, and lack of adequate communication with parents to coordinate curriculum aligned learning were the major challenging implementation areas in schools. For children of the nomads, respondents (11.5%, $n=27$) revealed that unavailability of parents/guardians to support learning at home, and lack of adequate communication with parents to coordinate curriculum aligned learning were the major challenging implementation areas in schools. For children of the migrant fishermen, respondents (7.7%, $n=18$) revealed that unavailability of parents/guardians to support learning at home, and lack of adequate communication with parents to coordinate curriculum aligned learning were the major challenging implementation areas in schools.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was conducted with the purpose of devising an evidenced-based policy framework for primary education delivery in times of global crises. The results revealed that all school children were at risk of dropouts from primary school education during crises. However, the socio-economically disadvantaged children were more vulnerable and most affected by crises. Findings also suggested operational strategies that could serve policy frameworks for school implementation during crises such as a global pandemic, disease

endemic, natural disasters, insurgency and so on. The frameworks modeled what was operational at the primary school level based on safeguarding strategies for primary school operations during crises as regards instructional delivery strategy, curriculum and resource strategy, determination of school needs and assessments, and the challenging implementation areas.

Recommendations

Based on findings of this study, the researchers recommend the following:

- (1) Government should provide and make available technological infrastructure that will aid teaching and learning during crises. This will also boost the morale of teachers for continuous instructional delivery.
- (2) Parents and guardians should address pupils' emotional health in order to improve their psychological, social and mental wellbeing.
- (3) Parents and guardians should provide optimal support to their children's learning at home.
- (4) The state and federal ministry of education should make readily available technical teams that will support and manage information and technological infrastructure in schools.
- (5) Teachers should be encouraged and motivated to improve their capacity and willingness to adapt to the changes required by the crisis situation.
- (6) Curriculum planners should ensure that adequate communication exist with parents to coordinate curriculum aligned learning.
- (7) Educational administrators must articulate required policy framework and provide necessary infrastructure to aid education in times of crises.

References

- Collins English Dictionary (1994). *Crisis*. Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers.
- O'Brien, M. (2011). Equality and fairness: Linking social justice and social work practice. *Journal of Social Work, 11*, 143–158.
- Omebe, S. E. & Omebe, C. A. (2015). The crisis of education in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, 2*(12), 1-8.
- Pierson, J. & Thomas, M. (2002). *Dictionary of social work*. Glasgow: Harper Collins.
- Reimers, F. M. & Schleicher, A. (2020). *A framework to guide an education response to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.