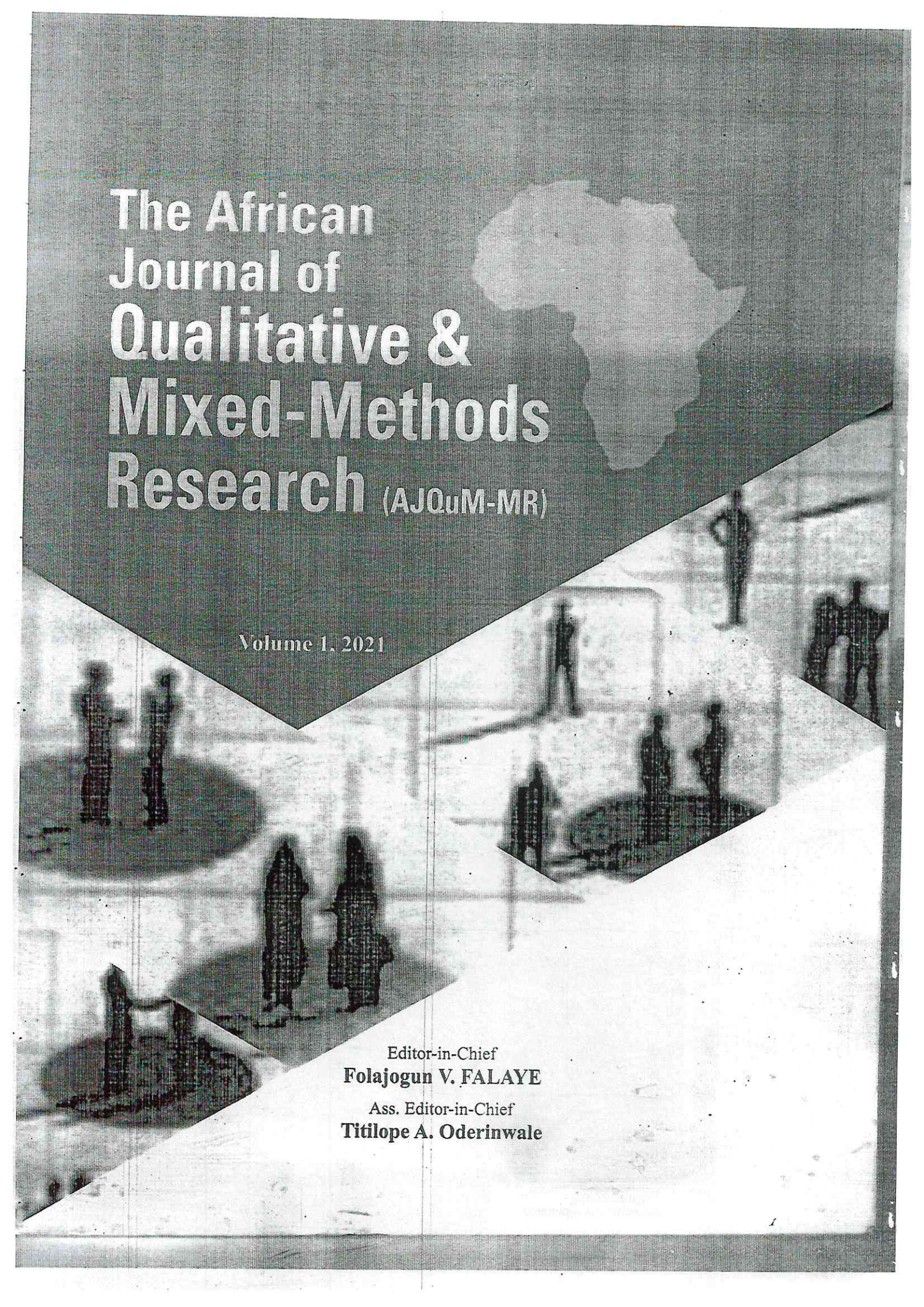




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Folajogun V. FALAYE

Ass. Editor-in-Chief
Titilope A. Oderinwale

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Folajogun V. FALAYE, Editor-in-Chief | **Titilope A. Oderinwale**, Ass. Editor-in-Chief
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Comparative Analysis of Educational Activities in Periods of Disruption of COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria and the UK: Lessons for Nigeria

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Abstract

The human society is getting more and more complex, so also is the business of education services. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about change and innovations into the education activities of both developed and developing nations of the world. Therefore, the study carried out comparative analysis of educational activities in the period of COVID -19 pandemic in Nigeria and the UK.

A qualitative method of phenomenology design was adopted. A total of nine respondents (parents, education administrators from the Federal Ministries of Education and Department of Education) were sampled in both countries using convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Online interview was done to get across to the respondents. The data gathered was analysed thematically, with the aid of Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software. The research concludes that Nigeria has to prepare for future challenges that may arise in form of emergences to make educational services available for her citizens.

Key Words: COVID-19, Disruptions, Education Services, Nigeria, United Kingdom

Introduction

COVID-19 shut the doors of schools worldwide for several months and the use of digital technology in education became an imperative to salvage the situation. This development led to so many challenges, though creating opportunities at the same time for those who are willing to adapt to the new normal. For instance, governments all over the world began to reflect and think of how best educational service delivery could continue even as various educational institutions remained closed. Without doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly disrupted education systems as well as academic calendars, globally. Since its declaration in March 2020, as a global public health emergency by the World Health Organisation (World Health Organisation, 2020). Due to the high rate of spread, developed and developing nations of the world implemented nationwide lockdown with the hope of flattening the epidemic curve (Oladipo, Fashola, Agboola, Adisa, Oyekanmi & Akinsete, 2020).

Nigeria experienced total lockdown from 20th March to June 2020, following the order of the Federal Government in order to curb the transmission of COVID -19 virus.

During the initial closure, most institutions were at a loss, as regards the construction of educational services because most institutions of learning in Nigeria were used to the didactic method of teaching. This posed a real threat in the education arena for learners and teachers regarding continuity of teaching and learning (World Bank 2020 & UNESCO, 2020). It is worrisome to discover that about 1.5 billion students globally are unable to attend schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2020). As a result of this, it became necessary for every educational institution all over the globe to set up electronic learning facilities. Unfortunately, it seems that the public schools remain mostly affected due to the COVID – 19 pandemics in many developing countries like Nigeria.

Data from the World Bank revealed that due to the global pandemic, students have lost an academic session as a result of the lockdown of educational services (World Bank, 2020). However, educational services in many parts of the world were ongoing in developed countries and in some private educational institutions in some parts of developing nations, with digital learning as the mainstay during the pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). Meanwhile, it appears the

use of digital platforms for undertaking educational engagements during this period had succeeded in widening the gap in educational inequality in most developing countries like Nigeria.

Mahapatra and Sharma (2020) noted that globally, more than 175million children are not enrolled in pre-primary education, a challenge compounded by shutdown of educational facilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The vital role of education as a response to emergencies has been recognised in both developed and developing nations of the world (Shaw, et al., 2021; Tabish, 2020; Sanfelici, 2020; Ajaiyi, & Awodiji, 2016). According to Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE, 2004), education provides physical, psycho-social and cognitive protection, which can be both life-saving and life-sustaining. This implies that education provides the knowledge, attitude and skills to survive in a crisis through the correct dissemination of relevant information (Creed & Morpeth, 2014). During the lockdown, most schools, and colleges in developed nations such as the UK have moved on to implement remote delivery of classes and assessment to avoid total lockdown in educational service delivery (OECD, 2020, Mishra, et al., 2020). However, there seems to be a digital divide in most developing countries like Nigeria during the global lockdown. For instance, some private primary, secondary and universities in Nigeria currently engage their stale and new students in online teaching and learning activities; while a vast majority of learners in public schools remained in their various homes with no hope of when to resume learning activities either virtually or physically (World Bank, 2020).

In the current dispensation, technology is being viewed as a tool that has great prospects in terms of presenting opportunities for making changes happen, especially in the period of disruption of academic calendar as being currently experienced globally (Yinus & Saidu, 2020). Therefore, sustaining the delivery of pedagogical process in Nigeria during disruption could be one way to forestall future occurrences. Also, given the current realities, developing countries including Nigeria, can

learn from more developed countries such as the United Kingdom in terms of planning, organisation, administration and implementation of digital educational technological usage. The rationale for comparing educational services in period of disruption occasioned by the COVID -19 pandemic in Nigeria and the United Kingdom is based on the fact that Nigeria got her political independence from the Great Britain, UK; the UK belongs to the G8 countries in the world (these are the group of eight highly industrialised and educationally-advanced nations of the world); Moreover, Nigeria and the UK have bilateral relations. Hence, if educational services aren't forestalled in periods of disruptions in most developed nations of the world, there is the need to for an assessment of this nature to bring about improved educational service delivery in periods of disruption occasioned by COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. This study intends to, compare and contrast coping strategies of both countries during the COVID-19 lockdown vis-a-vis virtual learning and make recommendations for adopting, where applicable in the western educational system.

Research Questions

- 1) What are the similarities caused by COVID-19 lockdown on the educational sector in Nigeria and the UK?
- 2) What are the differences caused by COVID-19 lockdown on the educational sector in Nigeria and the UK?
- 3) What are the educational services put in place during COVID-19 lockdown for continuity in teaching and learning in Nigeria and the UK?

Methodology

This study employed qualitative method of phenomenology. This design described the experience of stakeholders as regards educational activities in Nigeria and United Kingdom (UK) during COVID-19 pandemic (Creswell, 2014; Falaye, 2018). This design type was adopted considering the nature of the study because interest is on in-depth information on the state of education services in Nigeria and the UK with the aim of deducing a lessons worth for while the Nigeria system in the Post-COVID period and during other emergencies.

Convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used to sample nine (Six from Nigeria and three from the UK) respondents including teachers and students. This was done because of the COVID-19 lockdown, where the researchers have to identify individuals who are within reach of the investigators and ready to connect the researches with other informants, with accurate experience and information (Falaye, 2018; Naderifar, et.al, 2017; Atkinson, & Flint, 2001). Online interview through WhatsApp and internet calls with the consent of the interviewees was done to get across to the respondents. They were informed that the interview will be recorded and they all consented to it. These respondents are stakeholders in education (faculty members (lecturers), teachers, parents, education officer) (Falaye, 2018). Semi-structured interview was done to dig out in-depth information on COVID-19 lockdown in education services of Nigeria and the UK from the participants (Cohen, et.al. 2013; Doody & Noonan, 2013; Falaye, 2018). Ethical guidelines were observed in the course of data collection as no one was coerced or forced to partake in the interview. All the interviewees were voluntarily involved in the study. No name of individual or organisation was used. Data obtained from the respondents was transcribed and coded thematically (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Inductive approach of thematic content analysis was used with the aid of Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software to analyse the data obtained through the interview from the respondents.

Results and interpretations

Research Questions: What are the similarities caused by COVID-19 lockdown on educational sector of Nigeria and the UK?

Figure 1: Network showing similarities caused by COVID-19 lockdown of Nigeria and the UK. Three themes emerged from the result of the analysis of the responses of the participants (the closure of schools was found to be one of the similarities caused by COVID-19 lockdown systems of Nigeria and the UK as revealed from these excerpts:

"There is one particular similarity which is unexpected close down of all the institutions. All

the doors of all the academic halls, and non-academic teaching activities were closed down for contact, since students were warned to stay in their respective homes" (Participant 2)

"...schools were shut down, to put preventive measures and to curtail the spread and also put in place in Nigeria" (Nigerian Participant 4)

"...Previously, you remember, we do have physical learning, physical activities in school, prior before COVID-19. But currently as a result of the COVID-19, the similarities caused by COVID-19 in education, has made it that we don't get in contact with the physical learning again" (Nigerian Participant 1)

Virtual leaning

The closure of school resulted in the adoption of virtual learning as an alternative to the face-to-face learning in order to minimise the spread of the virus and maximise the use of technological devices, as shown from these excerpts:

"... we do have physical learning, physical activities in school, prior before COVID-19. But currently as a result of the COVID-19, the similarities caused by COVID-19 in education, has made it that we don't get in contact with the physical learning again, so it is virtual learning or distance learning..." (Nigerian Participant 1)

"...activities were taken electronically, e-learning as regards educational operations in the UK. I also discovered that while I was canvassing with my friends in Nigeria, some of the similar things happened..." (Nigerian Participant 1)

"...Well, once we talk of lockdown, that locks pupils and teachers too, definitely it led to the stoppage of schooling and the only option left is online teaching and learning..." (UK Participant 8)

"...it led to remote teaching and learning where you just sit in the comfort of your home and you get lectured..." (UK Participant 9)

The adoption of virtual learning expressed to have psychological effect because of physical interaction not available among students unlike face-to-face interaction where students can relate, as shown in these excerpts:

Psychological effect

"...the peculiar similarity and then also, the wellbeing of staff and students psychologically, there was a great psychological similarity between this because when someone was forced

out, unexpectedly from the classroom, there is no social interaction, there is no communication, all other things tend to impose psychological effect on the students and staff..." (Nigerian Participant 2)

"...One, the psychological effect because psychologists and sociologists have canvassed severally on several studies that human interaction is needed for growth and development. With lockdown, this definitely will be missing so it will impair the growth, the development of our young kids in this respect and another is the fact that the people, these

young kids especially some of them that have the opportunity to feed well in their schools, if this is removed, it will mean that there will be depletion in good eating, in good nutrition." (Nigerian Participant 4)

The association among the themes showed that closure of schools leads to adoption of virtual learning in the two countries, while the use of virtual was said to have psychological effect like there was no social interaction among students. **Research Questions:** What are the differences caused by COVID-19 lockdown on educational sector of Nigeria and the UK?

Five themes emerged from the analysis of the responses of the interview participants (Figure 2).

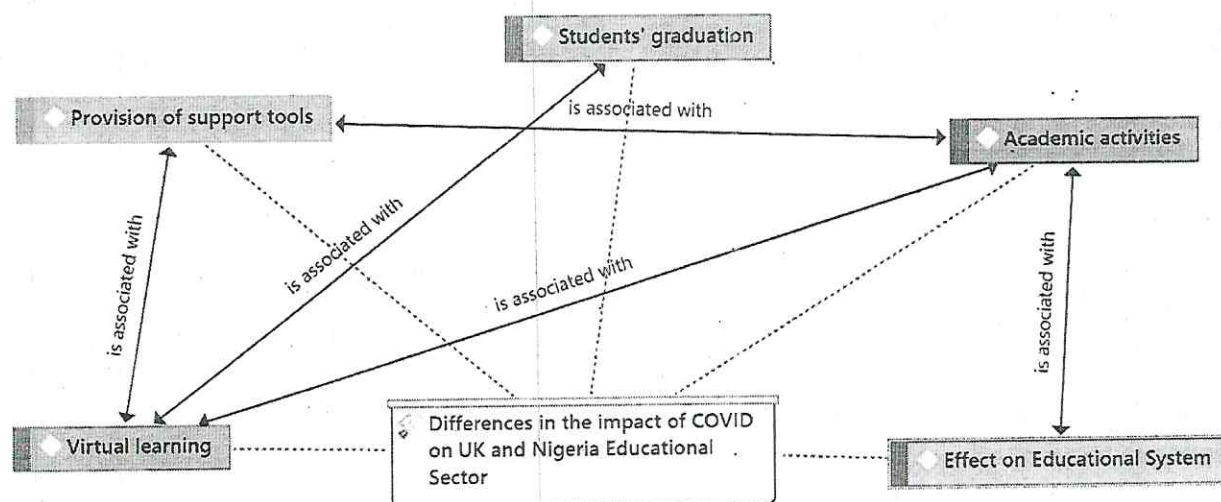


Figure 2: Network showing differences caused by COVID-19 lockdown on educational sector of Nigeria and the UK

The results of the analysis showed that academic activities were static in Nigeria (Figure 3). The total lockdown of the educational system in

Nigeria was emphasised (Participants 1, 2 & 8; Nigeria), while students could no longer continue with their learning activities (Participants 5 & 6; Nigeria). In contrast, academic activities in UK continued despite the lockdown (Participants 1 & 5UK).

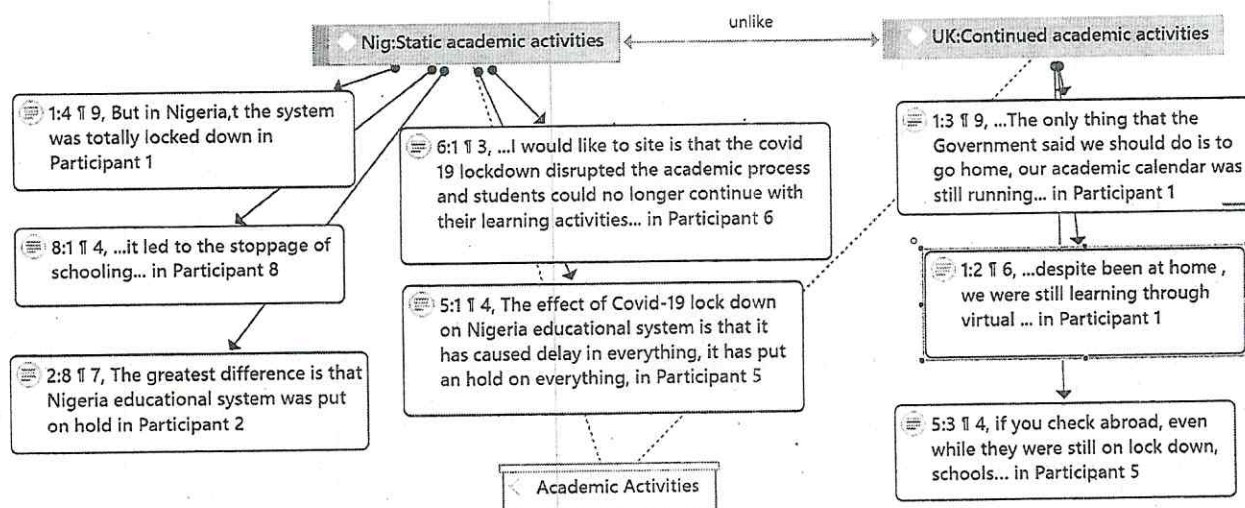


Figure 3: Network of participants' responses on academic activities

Virtual learning

The result of the analysis (Figure 4) of the responses showed that despite the lockdown, the UK resorted to virtual learning while Nigeria also did (Participant 6; Nigeria) but the strength and effectiveness of virtual learning in the UK was described and adjudged better than that of Nigeria (Participants 1 & 3; UK). ASUU strike was an issue in Nigeria, thus, there was no

consideration for virtual learning in public higher institutions schools while there were issues of facilities, the Internet, electricity, competence among others in private schools that opted for virtual learning (Participants 3 & 5; Nigeria). Hence, the Nigeria type of virtual teaching and learning was not considered as effective one

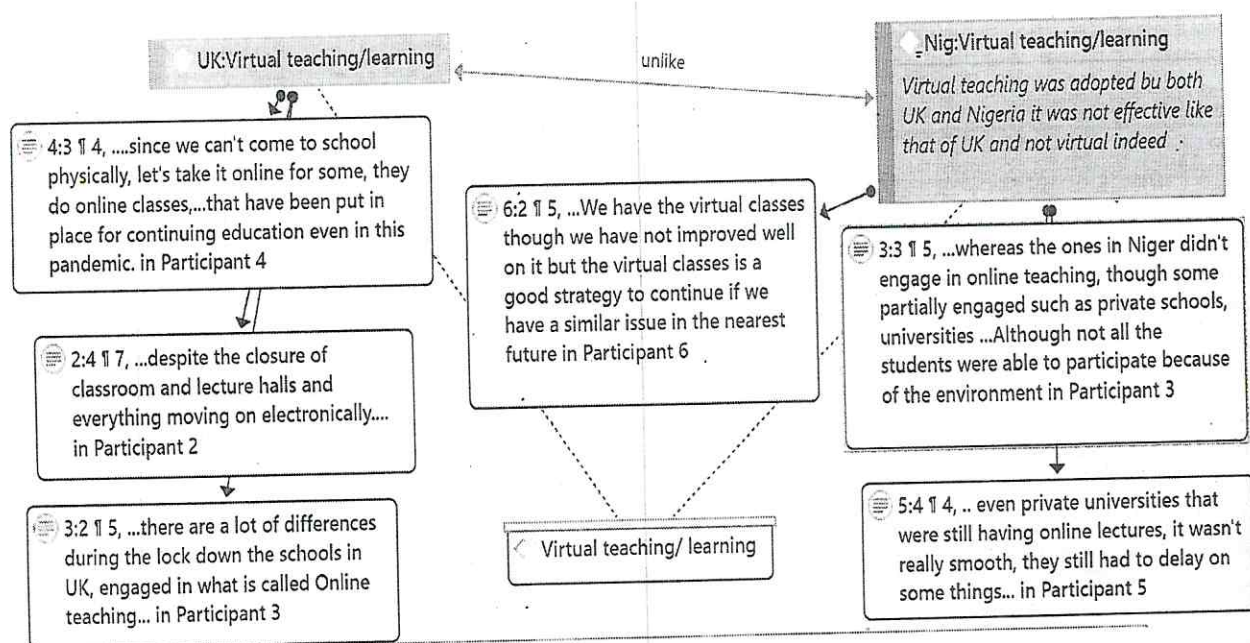


Figure 4: Network of participants' responses on differences in virtual learning in the UK and Nigeria

Provision of Support learning facilities

The closure of schools during the pandemic in both countries resulted in the choice of virtual teaching, the state of tools to support staff and students was found different between the two countries. Students were provided with necessary tools in the UK to ensure a successful transition while students in Nigeria institutions

did not enjoy such opportunities. Facilities that enhanced learning like relief funds, gadgets and everything that will enhance learning were provided for staff and students in the UK (Participants 1, 2 & 3). In contrast, students in Nigeria did not enjoy such a privilege (Participants 1, 3, 8 & 9).

Students' Graduation

Graduation time is very important for every student. Graduation time is another aspect of difference between the UK and Nigeria (Figure 5). The result of the study showed that graduation time was delayed as a result of the static academic activities in Nigerian institutions (Participants 1 & 5; Nigeria) while

students in the UK graduated according to scheduled time (Participants 1 & Nigeria). The ASUU strike adversely affected the higher education students in the public institutions while the delayed graduation time seemed not applicable to private institutions of higher learning.

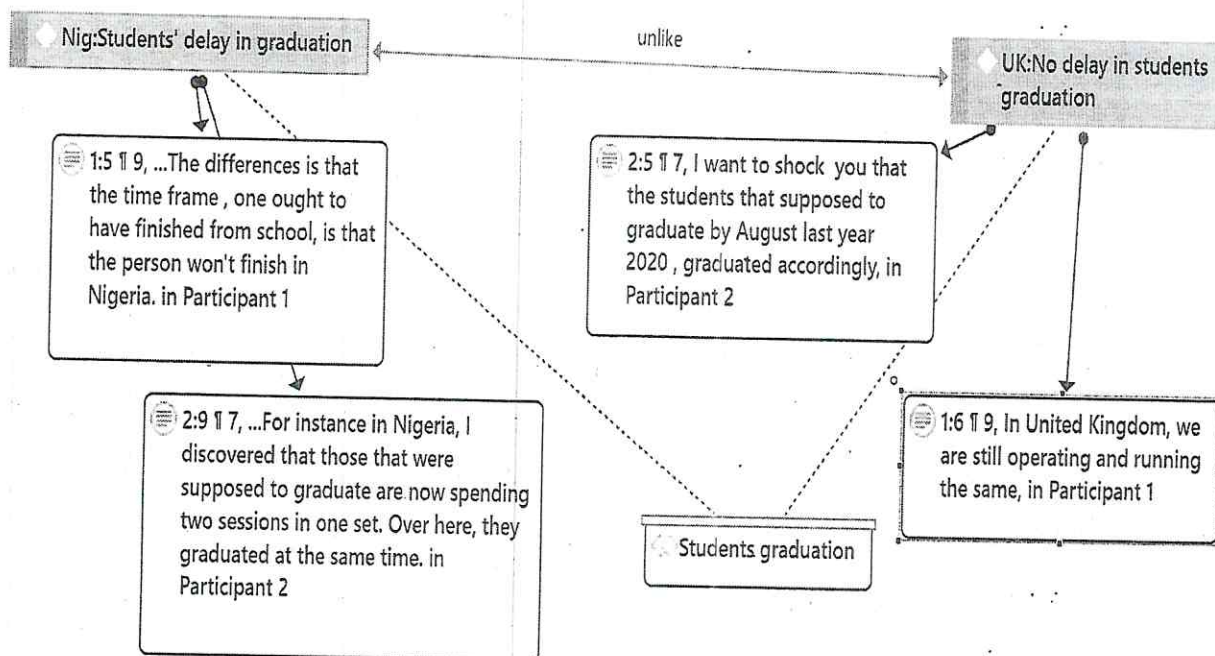


Figure 5: Network of respondents' responses on differences in the provision of learning support facilities in the UK and Nigeria

Effect on Education Programme

Effect of the pandemic on the educational activities was another aspect of differences between the UK and Nigeria (Figure 6). The pandemic had major effect on educational activities in Nigeria while the UK educational activities were not fully affected because it was well managed. It was said to have caused a setback to the Nigerian educational activities at large (Participant 1; Nigeria). The state of the educational institutions showed lack of readiness for quality education like institutions

abroad (Participant 5; Nigeria). One of the effects of the static academic activities was stated to be increase in cybercrime and societal destruction by students that seemed idle during the period when nothing was happening academically in Nigeria's public institutions (Participants 6 & 7). In contrast, it was indicated that the UK educational system was not affected like that of Nigeria (Participant 1; UK) while the UK educational system was specifically emphasised not to be affected. (Participant 2; UK)

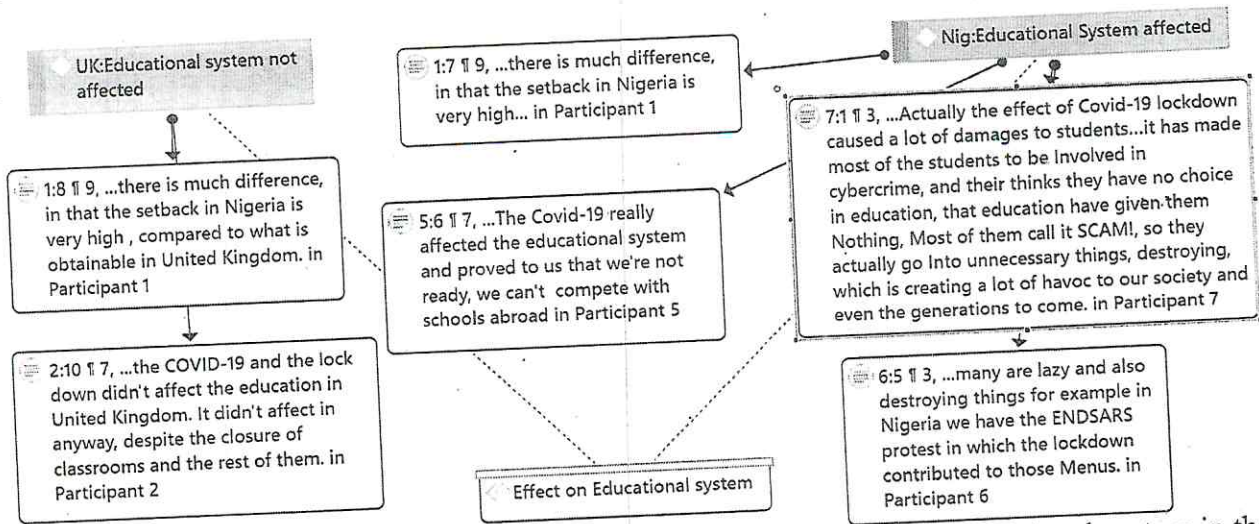


Figure 6: Network of participants' responses on differences in effect in educational system in the UK and Nigeria

Differences between UK and Nigeria educational activities caused by COVID-19

The summary of the differences between the educational activities of UK and Nigeria caused by COVID-19 is presented in Figure 8: Summarily, the findings from the study showed that the UK has her academic activities continued unlike Nigeria that was static because of ineffectiveness and industrial strike; students graduated in UK at the appropriate time unlike Nigeria that there was delay in graduation

because of the effect of the pandemic that was not properly managed; virtual learning was properly and effectively used in UK unlike Nigeria that encountered many challenges; students and staff were provided with necessary support learning facilities in the UK unlike Nigeria where such welfare was not received; the educational activities in the UK was not affected by the lockdown because virtual platform was judiciously used while the effect was huge on Nigeria's educational sector.

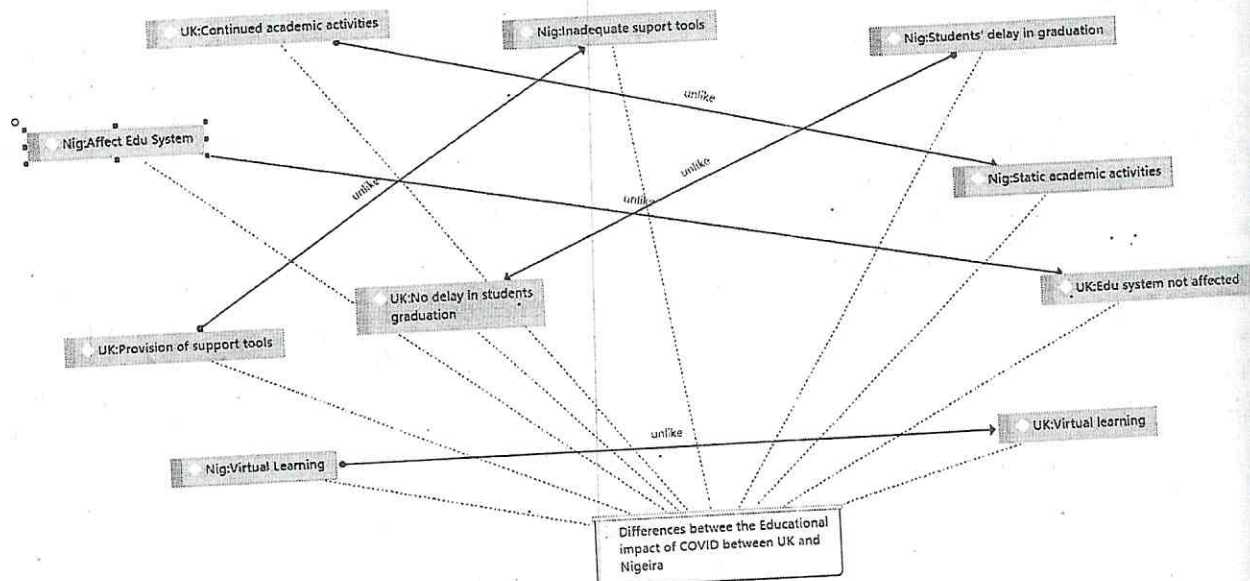


Figure 8: Network of participants' responses on differences in the educational system in the UK and Nigeria

Research Question Three: What strategies were put in place to handle the effect of COVID-19 on the educational sector?

The results of the analysis showed how the effects of the COVID-19 were handled in each country. Both the UK and Nigeria promote adherence to COVID-19 safety measures to hurt the spread of the virus as expressed in these excerpts:

"...the Government made sure that the use of Nose mask (that's very vital), the hand sanitizer, the wash hand basin, and social distancing..." (Participant 6; Nigeria);

"...The health officials were always on ground to ensure that there was no sudden inefficiency and inadequacy in the COVID-19 protocols (Participant 1; UK),

"...we have running water in the school environment where everyone must wear their nose mask and every other thing (Participant 3; UK)

It was found that government in Nigeria suggested virtual learning as an alternative to face-to-face learning, encouraged the use of radio broadcast for teaching, though some were of the opinion that there were not enough strategies put in place may be because of the ineffectiveness of the strategies adopted and industrial strike embarked on by ASUU at the university level:

"I don't really think they've put in place any

strategy; I only think that they've just been successful in giving us guidelines. Recently, I was still hearing that they wanted to open probably 19 new universities, the ones they have on ground, they've not still equipped them, and they've not brought them up to a standard university..." (Participant 5; Nigeria).

"...In the UK, some strategies were put in place unlike in Nigeria, where there was no strategy because during the period, ASUU was on strike, this strike caused the Federal Government not to listen to the school sector. So, there was nothing put in place, everything was working to ending the prolonged strike action" (Participant 3; Nigeria)

In contrast, welfare packages were said to be provided for both staff and students in the UK while parents were encouraged

"They were communicating with the students electronically, to ensure there was constant power supply, the Internet accessibility for students in order to communicate electronically with hitch free and these things are not obtainable in Nigeria..." (Participant 2; UK)

"...the government, provided amenities and also provided relief funds to students to buy data and keep abreast with what was happening around the world..." (Participant 3; UK).

Discussion of Findings

From the first research question, the study revealed that the closure of school activities was found to be one of the similarities caused by COVID-19 lockdown systems of Nigeria and the UK. During the lockdown, there were no physical contact and physical learning in Nigeria and the UK schools. This finding supports the respondents' responses in figure one. It was also revealed that in both countries, the lockdown of schools led to online teaching and distance learning activities. This finding agrees with the World Bank, 2020 report that encouraged educational institutions all over the globe to set up electronic learning facilities. The study ascertains that there was a great psychological similarity in both countries because when students and teachers were abruptly forced stay out of suddenly from the classroom, with attendant restrictions on social interactions, physical distancing with little or no communication took place. These tend to impose high level- psychological effect on the staff and students. This supports psychologists and sociologists on their studies that confirmed that human interaction is a veritable factor for human growth and development. Ozamiz-Etxebarria et-al (2020) study revealed that anxiety, stress symptoms and depression were of high percentage among teachers as psychological effect caused COVID-19 lockdown. Feeling of isolation, mental stress, and loneliness were reported as psychological impact of pandemic lockdown among students and teachers (Smith & Lim, 2020).

Findings from the second research question revealed that there was total disruption of academic activities in Nigeria while the academic activities continued in the UK despite the lockdown. Study also revealed that the UK educational institutions resorted into virtual learning through electronic facilities. Nigeria's privately-owned universities did, but the findings show that theirs weren't effective due to the poor network system, inadequate infrastructure and ASUU strike in the public-owned universities. The study also revealed that students graduated in the UK at the stipulated time unlike in Nigeria where there was delay in graduation especially in public-owned universities. This finding supports the ASUU

2020 calls for an accelerated increase in government funding of public-owned institutions in Nigeria.

Furthermore, findings in research question three revealed that the UK government put in place robust strategies such as provisions of welfare packages for both staff and students in order to cushion the effect of the lockdown on her citizens. UK government also provided enough relief packages and funds for students to buy data and hitch-free internet connectivity for online learning but in contrast to Nigeria had little or nothing of these resources neither were there, strategies little, or no strategies put in place to assist the staff and students towards effective online learning during the lockdown periods. Students and their parents were left to grapple with the situation alone. There was no relief package or funds set aside for data purchase assistance or free internet connectivity as applicable in the UK and other developed nations. This is in line with ASUU 2020 agitation for increased funding of public universities and other educational institutions in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study therefore concludes that Nigeria and the UK had their shares of educational activities disruption caused by COVID-19 pandemic. Both nations engaged in virtual classes to provide teaching service to learners. Although the UK, as a developed nation, was able to make provision for continuous education activities despite the lockdown but it was a totally different experience where relevant stake holders were left to navigate for the Nigerian educational institution to navigate through into online and distance learning.

Implications for Theory and Management Practice

This study has inquired on the education activities disruption caused by COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria and the UK. Although UK being a developed nation had a quick response strategy to the emerged lockdown as can be seen from the findings, Nigeria has a lot to learn, in order to prepare for emergencies.

Besides, emerging trends global in terms of robotics, artificial intelligence, the internet, remote learning which are characteristics of Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is worth looking into. In addition, the state insecurity, which has made our education institutions target for kidnapping, abduction, raping among others are issues that could warrant. It is already closing educational activities in some parts of Nigeria (whereby students were staying back at home).

The nation with policies in favour of distant virtual learning continue to ensure quality educational service delivery without needless obstruction. Comparative study can also be carried out on the same subject matter among developing nations like Pakistan, Malaysia, Ghana, among others. Also, quantitative approach could be adopted to widen the scope and generalisation.

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