

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ENUGU STATE: AN ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNMENT RESPONSE MEASURES

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ABSTRACT

Coronavirus disease is currently in its third wave reflecting in the rapid spread of Delta Variant across the federation and eliciting public anxiety on possible national lockdown. This apprehension is further heightened with the recent shut down of University of Lagos, on July 14, 2021 where many students residing in hostels were reported to have contracted the disease. Acknowledging the severity of this unpleasant situation, this discourse reviewed the efforts of federating tiers of government (with reference to Enugu state) towards mitigating the effects of the respiratory infection disease in public school system. The methodology of this discourse is a survey design which illuminate the essence of quantitative analysis of data collected from primary (respondent questionnaire) and secondary sources (text books, media scripts, articles). In specific sense, the sample size is 394 calculated at 95 percent coefficient level with 0.05 margin of error drawn from 26, 640 respondent population of teachers, students, pupils and parents in six education zones of Enugu state. This discourse revealed that over 40 million learners across the federation were adversely affected by the pandemic where 35.9 million primary and secondary school learners were out-of-school during 2020 national lockdown and measures initiated by Enugu state government to curtail the effects of the pandemic recorded abysmal poor performance of 2.3 grand mean response in calculated likert mean scale of 2.5. This unpleasant situation underscores the need for the government to review its organizational framework of response, advocacy on plausible modalities of teaching and learning in rural public schools, statutory synergy among other fundamentals to ensure effective teaching and learning in preparedness of national lockdown stemming from the current rapidity in deaths and case index of the virus across the federation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is an ideal for human development. The substance of education is premised in knowledge and skills for competence and innovations which are critical to scientific and technological advancement. Hence, education is the bedrock of national development. However, the unprecedented spread and fatalities of a respiratory infection disease in year 2020, across regions, countries and nationalities has enormously undermined the realization of ideals, values and imperatives of formal education. Basically, the coronavirus pandemic is a global public health fatality in recent time. Notably, the global pandemic of a severe acute respiratory syndrome – Corona (SARS-COV) otherwise known as COVID-19 is unprecedented public health challenge in the 21st century. Coronavirus is in the family of RNA viruses that infect birds and many mammals including humans. The virus cause illness that range from common cold to a more severe respiratory disease. In a specific sense, COVID-19 is caused by emerging strain of SARS – COVID – that is novel in humans, though belongs to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), for which can be referred as Zoonotic in transmission and person-to-person transmission. The transmission of COVID-19

is facilitated by close contact with the infected person. The virus can spread through nasal and droplets. These droplets are released when a person with the disease coughs, sneezes, talks or exhales. People can catch COVID-19 if they breathe in the infected droplets discharged into the air when a person with the disease coughs or sneezes openly (Madubuegwu, 2020: 4, Nkereuwem, *et al*, 2020:29 and Flip Chart on COVID-19 for Community Volunteer, 2020:2). This unpleasant situation invariably led to public anxiety prompting governments across the world to issue restriction order on social gathering and institutions to limit the spread of the respiratory infection disease. Accordingly, Obiakor and Adeniran, (2020) noted that there were range of government sanctioned and structure-shifting risk-control directives across Nigeria and the globe, in an attempt to curtail the spread of the novel coronavirus disease-COVID-19. From international airport closures to a nationwide closure of all schools, the effects are extremely severe for Nigerians. From this indication, this discourse examines the effects of COVID- 19 pandemic on educational institutions in Enugu state and evaluate government measures to stem the tide in attempt to illuminate issues and challenges underlying these responses.

1.1 Statement of problem

Nigeria as a developing country grapples with myriad of daunting challenges of political governance, economy and security occasioned with infrastructural deficit and poor service delivery. Hence, the effects of the global pandemic in sectors of the economy were severe and devastating. The immediate ramifications are evident. One of such sector is the basic education sector, the impact of which has been largely felt by students. The nationwide school closures have disrupted learning and access to vital school-provided services for a record number of students in Nigeria. According to UNESCO, established that almost 40 million learners have been affected by the nationwide school closures in Nigeria, of which over 91 percent are primary and secondary school learners. In a short time, COVID-19 has disrupted the landscape of learning in Nigeria by limiting how students can access learning across the country. An already fragile education system, the COVID-19 pandemic poses unprecedented challenges on the government, students, and parents which highlight and could amplify some of the cracks in the system. As the nation begins to grapple with these challenges, a key question arises: Is the Nigerian education system designed to adapt rapidly to the changing world? Given the state of affairs in the world today, the nation's ability to ensure continuation of learning will depend largely on their ability to swiftly harness available technology, provide adequate infrastructure, and mobilize stakeholders to prepare alternative learning programs (Obiakor and Adeniran, 2020: 4).

Emphatically, Report of UNESCO (2020) also indicated that in Nigeria about 35.9 million primary and secondary school learners are currently out-of-school as a result of the school closures. For primary schools, this number totals approximately 25.6 million students, of which about 87 percent (23.5 million) are students who enrolled in public schools. The numbers are just as stark for secondary school learners. Roughly 10.3 million secondary school students who are out-of-school as a result of the closures, approximately 81 percent (8.4 million) of them are public school students. In Enugu state, it was a crisis situation as the government work fervently to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. As regards education, academic programme and activities were suspended in compliance to the directive of national lockdown as the state education authorities explore measures to sustain the academic interests of students and pupils especially the exiting classes. From this indication, there are concerns as regards the impact of the pandemic in teaching and learning and effectiveness of government response measures which underlines the thrust of this discourse.

1.2 Research questions

The study is therefore premised on the following fundamental questions:

1. How does the coronavirus pandemic affects teaching and learning in public schools in Enugu state?
2. What are the measures initiated by the government to mitigate the adverse effects of coronavirus pandemic towards teaching and learning in public schools in Enugu state?
3. What are the challenges militating against measures initiated?

2. CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

Accordingly, the clinical profile of coronavirus disease as earlier noted, indicates that it is a respiratory infection disease as embellished in the report of NCDC. Hence, the report of Nigeria Center for Disease Control, (2020), documents that coronavirus are zoonotic, meaning they are normally transmitted between animals and people. The 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. It was first detected on the 7th of January 2020 in Wuhan, China. Some coronavirus can be transmitted from person to person, usually after close contact with an infected patient, for example, in a household or healthcare setting. For this, coronavirus disease (COVID-19), while most initial transmission appeared to be zoonotic, person-to-person transmission is the most common mode of transmission currently. The incubation period of COVID-19 is between 2 and 14 days. This is the time between when a person gets infected and when they start showing symptoms. If a person remains well 14 days after contact with someone with confirmed COVID -19, it is unlikely that they have been infected. The following symptoms may develop in the 14 days after exposure to someone who has COVID 19 infection. Generally, these infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weak immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. There is no evidence that children are more

affected than other age groups –few cases have been reported in children. The spread of COVID-19 is most likely to happen when there is close contact (within 2 metres) with an infected person. The risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person. Droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes (respiratory secretions) containing the virus are most likely to be the most common means of transmission. Sadly as earlier noted, the pandemic of this novel respiratory infection disease adversely affected the education sector of the economy as schools were shut down and academic programmes suspended. As millions of school students and pupils across the federation groan in an era of unprecedented public health crisis that swept economies into recessions and dealt a terrible blow on a fragile education sector of a developing economy such as Nigeria.

Accordingly, the concept of education is replete with varied definitions and perspectives. In this regard, the meaning of education cannot be definite as it means different things to different people depending on their perception of what it is. Education is taken to mean “knowledge” “enlightenment” or “wisdom” For instance, an individual may be referred as not “enlightened” which implied that he or she behaves differently from the norms of those who have been to school and, so “the educated”, “enlightened or the wise ones”. But is it adequate to describe the person that has not attended a formal school system as uneducated? (National Teachers’ Institute, 2010:1) This fundamental question invariably elicits views to establish the aims of education. In this regard, Swift (1989) cited in Adekunle (2016), defined education as the process by which individual acquire physical, moral and social capacities demanded of him by the group which he is born and within which he function. Also, Fafunwa (1974) defined education as the aggregate of all the processes through which a child develops abilities and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society. In similar perspective, Ukeje (1993) viewed education as the process that occurs whenever any influence produces a change in the physical and mental behaviour. From this indication, education is therefore the process by which every society attempts to peruse and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, skills and attitude in its cultural setting and heritage in order to foster continuously the well being of mankind and guarantee its survival against the unpredictable at times hostile and destructive elements and forces of man and nature (Nwagwu, 2016: 5). In other words, education is knowledge and skills aimed to develop competencies in organizational context for productivity and societal context for advancement. In this vein, Ukeje (1993) listed the following aims or objectives of education which are:

- i. To develop the full potentialities of every child while at same time taking into consideration the needs and welfare of the country.
- ii. To develop social and individual efficiency so that the individual can become more effective in the society.
- iii. For the preparation and training of young people for the problems, the task and the future as they exist today.
- iv. To develop the discipline of the body
- v. Self-fulfillment for self-realization.

Cursory review of the preceding analysis showed that education process is facilitated through teaching and learning in the context of formal and informal setting. In a more specific sense, teaching and learning in the context of formal setting is described as school. To this end, teaching is an attempt to help people acquire some skills, attitude, knowledge, ideas and appreciation (Clark and Starr, 2014: 4). Teaching perform the following functions

- a. Informing and explaining
- b. Stimulating, directing, guiding and administering
- c. Identifying what to learn
- d. Identifying the learning problem
- e. Evaluating, reporting and recording
- f. Classroom arrangement.

These schools as institutions of teaching and learning were however shut down as earlier noted by the government. To this extent, public school system functions under the policies of government as an authoritative institution of the state. In other words, what does government represents? Ethridge and Handelman (2013) stressed that government is vast and multifaceted arrangement different in scale, complexity and structure. In a similar sense to the purpose of government, Woll and Binstock (1972) remarked that from the time of Plato in the fifth century B.C to the present, political philosophers have disagreed on how government originated and function. Thus, far complete agreement has eluded them. However, these political philosophers have been able to accept two basic reasons for setting up government:

1. Man’s need for collective or group action to accomplish those things which one man could not accomplish alone.
2. To set standard by which members of a society must live.

Invariably, from the fundamental purpose of government as illuminated in Woll and Binstock’s view, Almond *et al* (2011) embellished the functions of government obvious in community and nation-building, security and order, protecting rights, promoting economic efficiency and growth. Hence, Almond’s assertion underscores the need to assess the efforts of Enugu state government in sustaining the tradition of teaching and learning in era of public health anxiety to further accentuate the theoretical relevance of governance.

2.1 Theoretical Discourse

Emphatically, theory is very essential in empirical knowledge. This is because it lends credence to the factuality of a phenomenon under study for purpose of empirical analysis, prediction and generalization. Therefore, this research study adopt David Easton's political system theory as appropriate framework to examine the rationale, imperative and limitations of government response measures to stem the effects of respiratory infection disease in education institutions of Enugu state. David Easton is a behavioural scholar and exponent of political system framework of analysis. Thus, David Easton conceptualized political system as a system of interaction where binding decisions or authoritative allocations of values are made and implemented. In other words, this process of making these decisions stems from the streams of demands from the political system or the environment. On the assumptions of this framework of analysis, Verma (1974) explicate that input consist of "demand" and "support". Demand and support are received by the system from the society. A demand according to Easton is an expression or opinion that an authoritative allocation with regard to a particular subject matter should or should not be made by those responsible for doing so. The output of a political system are decisions and actions of the authorities and help in organizing the consequences flowing from the behaviour of the members of the political system for its environment. Political actions have consequence for the environmental system. Therefore, it implies that the political system is a process of input and output matrix for the overall development of the state. Hence, it further provides empirical insight on how the making and implementation of public policies may the contribution of the masses in the policy process. In explicit sense, the input emanate from the environment through the channels of demand which expresses the plight and aspiration of the masses to the political system. For instance, the demand for social services, infrastructures etc. On the other hand, the political system responds to these demands through appropriate legislations and policies which are alternatively known as output of the political system. And the support for the responses of the political system stems from the political environment particularly from the masses. To this end, this support is exemplified in the commendation and appreciation of government policies and programmes towards public plight. This is further exemplified below in the following diagram.

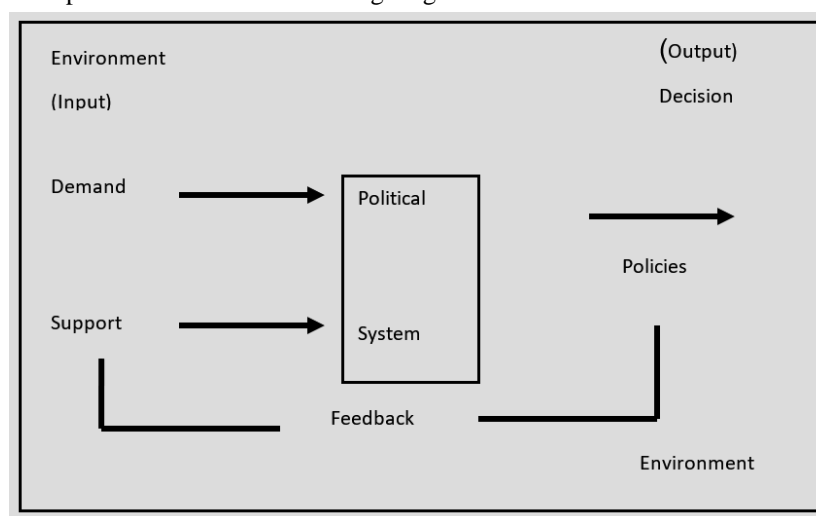


Figure 1. Political System Framework

Source: Gauba, (2003:93)

In relation to the analysis of emergence and challenges of global pandemic on education institutions, it is instructive to note that the Enugu state government adopted series of measures to mitigate its spread and effects on education institutions. This is obvious in public anxiety of teachers and parents of school children on the rapidity of case incidences of the pandemic in Abuja, Lagos and Ogun states and the plight of exiting classes in primary and secondary schools after the shutdown of education institutions. These anxieties and plights were expressed in media advocacy which constitutes the "process of demand" within the framework of David Easton's political system analysis. Hence, the unpleasant development elicited government's response to mitigate the intensity of spread and effects of the respiratory infection disease in public schools which represents the "out-put decisions" of Enugu state political system. In conclusive sense, the discourse evaluates through empirical survey the impact of response measures initiated by the Enugu state government to the plight and exigencies of public education institutions in coronavirus pandemic. In other words, the David Easton political system framework is the appropriate theory of this discourse.

2.2 Coronavirus Pandemic and Government Response Measures

In explicit sense, Ugwuozor and Madubuegwu(2020) documents that the first index case of coronavirus disease was reported in Nigeria on 27th February 2020 when an unnamed Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus.

Enugu State confirmed its first case of the virus disease on March 28th, 2020. It was a case of a couple from Isi-Uzo Local Government Area (who returned from London), showed mild symptoms of the virus, and samples collected were later diagnosed which indicated positive. They were later isolated, treated, and discharged. As a global health challenge, the COVID-19 pandemic has inextricably prompted governments across the world to initiate measures and expedite actions to contain its spread. The first case of the COVID-19 which was reported by the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC) in February 2020, spurred the Enugu state government to activate modalities and processes to deal with the spread of the virus. Thus, when the first case of the virus was reported in the state on March 28th, 2020, the government was not overwhelmed but strategically responded. Furthermore, Enugu state government initiated series of measures in clinical service, medical infrastructures, media advocacy, tax relief, humanitarian (palliatives) to mitigate the spread and adverse effects of the pandemic. The adverse effects that stem from restriction and national lockdown. The following is the chronology of measures taken by the Nigerian government to contain the spread of the virus disease;

- (a) In January, 2020, the Nigerian government established a Coronavirus Preparedness Group following the development of the epidemic of the virus in China.
- (b) As part of the movement restriction, on 18th March 2020, Nigerian authorities issued a travel ban and suspended visa for all travelers coming from countries that had registered over 1,000 cases domestically.
- (c) On 23rd March 2020, Nigeria Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Secondary, Primary and Nursery Schools including NYSC Orientation Camp across the country were directed to shut down.
- (d) On 30th March, Lagos, Abuja, FCT and Ogun State were placed under complete lockdown as regarding the increase rise in cases. Also President Muhammadu Buhari directed the cessation of all movement in Lagos and FCT for an initial period of 14 days, which took effect from 11pm on Monday 30th March 2020.
- (e) On 23rd April, the Nigerian government extended the national lockdown and banned inter-state travel however food and medicine were permitted to enter the country and travel across states.
- (f) On April 27th 2020, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari declared overnight curfew from 8pm to 6am across the country as part of the new measure to contain the spread of the COVID-19. This announcement came along with the phased and gradual easing of the lockdown measures in FCT, Lagos and Ogun States which took effect from Saturday, 2nd May 2020 at 9am.
- (g) On Monday, 29th June, 2020, the Nigerian government extended the phase of the eased inter-state movement outside curfew hours with effect from July 1st, 2020.
- (h) On Monday 27th July 2020, the Federal Government of Nigeria extended the second phase of eased lockdown by an additional one week.
- (i) On Thursday, 6th August, 2020, the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) and Chairman of the Presidential Task Force (PTF) on COVID-19 announced the extension of the second phase of the eased lockdown by another four weeks (Madubuegwu, 2020: 19).

Enugu state government also took measures in reference to federal government directive as embellished by Ugwuozor and Madubuegwu (2020), the state government in March 2020, instructed that:

- i. All public officers/civil servants in the state were to work from home till further notice.
- ii. Public servants exempted from this directive include Health Workers, Forest Guards, Neighbourhood Watch personnel, Water Corporation Staff, officials of Waste Management Operation, Staff of the Enugu State Emergency Management Agency, Fire Service, and persons involved in essential services.
- iii. The exempted public servant were further advised to observe NCDC health protocols of physical distancing and hand hygiene.
- iv. Suspension of all cultural and social gathering including the following:
 - (a) Marriage Ceremonies.
 - (b) Masquerade festivals.
 - (c) Burial ceremony.
 - (d) Night Clubs.
 - (e) Sporting and Recreational activities in the state.

Public commercial Transport operators in the state were also directed to observe the following rules in compliance to NCDC health protocol of physical distancing:

- (a) Tricycle riders were not permitted to carry more than two passengers.
- (b) Commuter Buses were not permitted to carry more than two passengers per seat.
- (c) City-Cabs were not permitted to carry more than three passengers.

Security Agencies were further directed to ensure strict compliance with the order. On April 13, 2020, the state government limited the operation time of Tricycle riders from 6 am to 7 pm. They were further advised to comply strictly with the NCDC health protocols of wearing a facemask, maintain physical distancing and refrain from carrying more than two passengers.

Most importantly, the state government also introduced certain initiatives to mitigate adverse effects of the pandemic in the public school system. In this regard, Ugwuozor and Madubuegwu (2020) again notes that the government launched a programme titled, “Enugu School on Radio” in collaboration with Coal City FM, 92.9 Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) to keep students and pupils intellectually busy with a daily subject lesson on Radio during the period of national lockdown. Thus, the programme ran from April 20, 2020 to September 2020. Secondary School Classes on all the subject came on air from 5 pm to 6 pm (Monday to Friday) and the Primary School Classes on all subjects came on air from 11 am to noon (Monday to Friday). Indeed, the measure received widespread commendations from parents of these students and pupils. In addition, on 31st July, 2020, the state government flagged off the fourth phase of the decontamination and fumigation of schools ahead of school reopening and resumption of academic activities. These efforts ostensibly demonstrate government’s resilience in a difficult time amid challenges. It is therefore the objective of this discourse to explore the impact of these measures, identify its challenges and recommend plausible measures on way forward.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The design of this discourse is a survey design. Hence, the design is streamlined to draw inferences from causal relationship between independent and dependent variables under study. The design also illuminates the imperatives of population, sample and sampling techniques, instruments for data collection and analysis.

3.1 Population

In Enugu public school system beyond the tertiary institutions (Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu State Polytechnic and Enugu State College of Education), there are six education zones comprising secondary and primary schools in the state:

- i. Enugu Education Zone
- ii. Agbani Education Zone
- iii. Awgu Education Zone
- iv. Udi Education Zone
- v. Nsukka Education Zone
- iv. Obollo Education Zone

The statistics of primary and secondary schools in these education zones are in tens of hundreds occasioned with thousands of students and pupils. For purpose of measurability and clarity of study, 72 public schools (36 primary schools and 36 secondary schools) were targeted on the ratio of 6 schools (3 primary schools and 3 secondary schools) per education zone. Furthermore, 14, 400 students (7200 students and 7200 pupils from 36 secondary and primary schools) were targeted on the ratio of 200 students per school (both primary and secondary). In the same vein, 1, 440 teachers were selected on the ratio of 20 teachers per school (from 36 primary schools and 36 secondary schools). For purpose of inclusiveness, 10800 parents from Parent Teachers’ Association, PTA were on the ratio of 150 parents and guardians per school (both primary and secondary). The summation is 26, 640 respondent population.

3.2 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The respondent population of the study was taken to be 26,640 comprising teachers, students and parents. The sample size was calculated at 95 percent coefficient level with a 0.05 margin of error. The formula states:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where n	=	Sample Size
N	=	Population Size
e	=	Error Limit
ξ	=	Margin of error
e	=	Minimum 0.05.

Applying it and substituting value for the above formula, we have

$$n = \frac{26,640}{1 + 26,640(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{26,640}{1 + 26,640(0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{26,640}{67.6}$$

$$= 394 \text{ is the sample size.}$$

3.3 Instruments for data analysis

For the purpose of analysis, data was analyzed using the Likert Mean rating scale. It assigned numerical values according to the strength and weakness of the opinion of the respondents. In the following order;

- Strongly Agreed, SA (4 points),
- Strongly Disagreed, SD (3 points),
- Agreed, A (2 points)
- Disagreed (1 points)
- Undecided (0 point).

Hence, the researchers used five (5) points rating scale (to determine the extent of acceptability or non-acceptability) along their respective numerical values. The researchers added the interval scale of 0.5 to bring the mean to 2.5. From this indication, the researchers established a decision rule of 2.5. Hence, any response receiving a mean score rating of 2.5 is regarded positive response less than 2.5 is regarded negative response. Also, the researchers equally employed the cumulative (grand mean) to determine the strength or weakness of the overall responses.

4. DATA PRESENTATION

Research Question 1: How does the coronavirus pandemic affects teaching and learning in public schools in Enugu state?

Table 2: Responses on the effects of the coronavirus pandemic towards teaching and learning in public schools in Enugu state.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	X	Decision
1	Schools were closed.	3.6	Positive
2	All academic and extra-curriculum activities were suspended.	3.7	Positive
3	Internal and external examinations were suspended.	3.5	Positive
4	Students and pupils lost interest in studies.	3.4	positive
5	Euphoria for online lesson platforms (WhatsApp, Zoom)	3.6	Positive

Source: Field Survey, 2021

$$\text{Grand mean } \sum \frac{x}{n} = \frac{3.6+3.7+3.5+3.4+3.6}{5} = 17.8/5 = 3.5$$

Research Question 2: What are the measures initiated by the government to mitigate the adverse effects of coronavirus pandemic towards teaching and learning in public schools in Enugu state?

Table 3: Responses on the measures initiated by the government to mitigate the adverse effects of coronavirus pandemic towards teaching and learning in public schools in Enugu state.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	X	Decision
6	Media advocacy on the essence of online class.	3.8	Positive
7	Enugu School on Radio Program.	3.7	Positive
8	Decontamination and fumigation of public schools by Enugu State Fire Service.	2.1	Negative
9	Provisions of Hand Sanitizers and Nose Mask to schools.	2.1	Negative
10	Education of Head Teachers on COVID 19 protocols for safety of students, pupils and teachers.	2.9	Positive

Source: Field Survey, 2021

$$\text{Grand mean } \sum \frac{x}{n} = \frac{3.8+3.7+2.1+2.1+2.9}{5} = 14.6/5 = 2.9$$

Research Question 3: What are the challenges militating against measures initiated?

Table 4: Responses on the challenges of measures initiated.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	X	Decision
11.	Most students and parents are not aware of Enugu School on Radio program.	2.5	Positive
12.	Most Schools are fumigated.	2.2	Negative
13.	Advocacy was extended to community public schools in rural areas.	1.9	Negative

14.	Most schools were routinely supervised by Education Inspectors on compliance to COVID-19 protocols.	2.3	Negative
15.	Palliative of Hand Sanitizers did not reach most public schools	2.6	Positive

Source: Field Survey, 2021

$$\text{Grand mean } \sum \frac{x}{n} = \frac{2.5+2.2+1.9+2.3+2.6}{5} = 11.5/5 = 2.3$$

4.1 Data analysis

The index of figure 2 outlined responses on the various forms of the effects of the pandemic on public schools in Enugu state. Data elicited from the cluster of five questionnaire options as seen in 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 showed that adverse effects of the respiratory infection disease towards teaching and learning in schools across the six education zones of the state except item 5 which portrayed the euphoria for online platforms of learning as a trending phenomenon in era of public health anxiety. The positive indication of the responses of the first research question reflects in the reasonable grand mean of 3.5. Furthermore, figure 3 attempts to establish the extent of awareness, indulgence and evaluation of measures introduced by the state government towards mitigating the effects of the pandemic. In this sense, the index reveals that items 8 and 9 as presented showed deficiencies of the state authorities to ensure adequacy of public health safety as regards to environment of public schools and COVID-19 protective materials for teachers, students and pupils. However, the respondent's views showed reasonable level of sensitization and advocacy occasioned by serious attempt by the state education authorities to ensure teaching and learning through the airwaves as embellished in items 6, 7 and 10. The grand mean of 2.9 of responses on government is not impressive for evaluation. The last figure 4 illuminates the plight of the respondents on the myriad of challenges bedeviling measures initiated by the government. Information was elicited from the respondents in a cluster of five questionnaire items as contained in items 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 which showed that government efforts did not yielded meaningful outcomes in the state public school system during the era of coronavirus pandemic as revealed in the responses of the respondents on the options outlined. It further implied that these challenges may have adverse effects on academic performance of the exiting classes in external examination. The calculated 2.3 grand mean showed abysmal failure of government's measures to stem the tide of pandemic in Enugu state public school system.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Emphatically, coronavirus disease pandemic is indeed a devastating public health challenge in the 21st century with millions of deaths and index case fatality across countries and nationalities. The pandemic also showed the inadequacies of public health system of most states across the federation and efforts of the governments to grapple with the crises of the respiratory infection disease. In Enugu state, there is reasonable enthusiasm and drive of the government through several policy measures to alleviate the plights of indigenes and residents of Wawa state. However, this field survey report showed that the state education authorities failed in certain measures (as revealed in the figure 4) to sustain academic interest of students and pupils in the era of public health anxiety. Perhaps, these failures may be attributed to failure of effective synergy with other state institutions, absence of sectoral blue print for strategic response, infrastructural deficit, inadequate advocacy in rural community schools, absence of school supervision etc. These challenges therefore resonates the need to make plausible recommendations in credence to the findings of this discourse. First, the country is currently in the third wave of the pandemic occasioned with the outbreak of Delta variant of the virus raising fear of possible national lockdown. In other words, the state government should review the objectives, modalities and targets of organizational framework of COVID-19 Response mechanism in view of the unfolding realities. As advocated by Ugwuozor and Madubuegwu (2020), there is need to develop Enugu State Post-Pandemic Recovery Plan (ESPPRP) to serve as a sectoral mandate in Economy, Health, Education, Security, Information, and Service Delivery among others for strategic and coordinated policy actions for improved Enugu state at the exit of the pandemic. Secondly, the need for state education authorities to look beyond Enugu School on Radio Programme for urban teachers and learners and initiate plausible modalities for teaching and learning in rural community schools across the six education zones. In addition, sensitization and advocacy on COVID-19 protocols should also be extended in these rural areas.

Thirdly, the Enugu State Emergency Management Agency should ensure efficient organizational procedure for distribution of Hand Sanitizers and Face Mask in public schools in urban and rural communities across the six education zones in the state. This has become imperative to ensure safety in instructional process. In addition, more efforts are required from the inspectorate unit of state education authorities such as Enugu State Universal Basic Education Board, Post-Primary School Board etc to ensure consistency in school supervision and inspection. Fourthly, the inadequacy of decontamination and fumigation of public schools by Enugu State Fire Service is a failure of synergy. Hence, the exercise did not adequately reached some schools across the six education zones in the state. In this regard, the state Ministry of Education (through the statutory boards under its supervision) in synergy with the Enugu State Fire Service should provide leadership for the adequacy of the exercise.

Lastly, the Enugu State Universal Basic Education Board and Enugu State Post Primary School Board should interface and ensure sensitization of Head Teachers and Teachers of Primary and Secondary schools in the six education zones on the use of online platforms for effective teaching and learning in situation of lockdown or school closure. The knowledge and competence in the use of these online platforms will further enhance effective teaching and learning which a trending innovation is in Nigeria Education system today.

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