



Learn or Perish

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Key insights

- In Nigeria, the adoption rate of digital learning tools varies across gender, age groups, and geography.
- Younger children had more access to learning digitally than older children.
- The probability of accessing digital learning tools was higher for males than females.



Source: 10 Principles for Developing ICT In Education Programs | Education Links (edu-links.org)

- The likelihood that digital learning tools will be adopted is higher in the Northwest, Southwest and South-South, and lesser in the Northeast.
- Short-term mitigation strategies and long-term policy recommendations such as proper planning and monitoring, infrastructure development, security, public awareness, sensitisation, capacity building in digital tools access and utilisation, professional development, and a focus on parental roles are needed to be put in place.

What are the issues?

Like most countries, Nigeria implemented a lock-down policy restricting all movements except for essential services and functions in order to contain the COVID-19 virus. COVID-19 pandemic is one of such crises that seem to have brought unprecedented emergencies in the education sector. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's education sector has been considered fragile and fraught with inequality in access to schooling and learning experiences. Access to digital tools and equipment, particularly portable ones like smartphones, tablets or laptops, and the Internet, which served as an alternative learning platform during the lockdown, were relatively low before the pandemic.

Why are the issues important?

Attaining sustainable economic development depends largely on human capital development. To achieve higher human capital development, and by extension, SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 5 (gender equality), it is imperative that government, in close consultation with other pertinent stakeholders in the education sector, put in place appropriate policies and measures that will enhance quality teaching and learning before, during and after crisis such as COVID-19, and mitigate the impact of negative shocks on education. These policies and measures could aim to develop digital infrastructure, reduce digital inequality, and develop digital services to foster continued education services, even during a global or national crisis.

Policy options

The findings suggest that COVID-19 pandemic lock-down only exacerbated the problems of high rates of school absenteeism, dropout, and out-of-school children, which were relatively high before the pandemic. Educational (learning & teaching) shocks emerge due to the lock-down. However, the pandemic led to an upsurge in access and subsequent adoption of digital tools for teaching and learning. The lock-down-induced shock increased the probability of using digital tools to assess access

materials in 2020 compared to 2018/2019, though there was generally low access to digital tools for learning by those affected by the lock-down-induced shock. Several e-learning challenges were identified as many educators were technically deficient due to inadequacy or lack of internet facilities and capacities for new learning styles, android phones/laptops, lack of network coverage or network failures, full subscription to learning platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams not budgeted for, power failure, uneven distribution of new learning facilities during COVID-19, and unpreparedness for the shock.

The following policy options were suggested: there could have been no lock-down to avoid unnecessary disruption in learning and teaching; there could have been a partial lock-down restricted to hotspots; if the government has to impose a full lockdown, resilient mitigation strategies should be implemented to avoid missed learning opportunities and socio-economic shocks such that there will be continuity in teaching and learning.

Policy recommendations

The government needs to improve the provision of e-learning platforms in schools by making funds available for e-learning projects. Reducing inequality in access to digital technologies at all education levels of school should remain a policy priority among policy-makers and pertinent stakeholders in the education sector. It is equally important to build capacity for e-learning and digital technologies in schools while adopting a proactive approach to preparedness and response to national crisis across all the educational levels.



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