



Impact of Covid-19 Measures on Kenya's Education Sector

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The context

Education is an important ingredient for human capital development. It trains manpower for all institutions whether private or public. Learning institutions comprise not only academic institutions but also training institutions such as those for teacher training, those training health personnel, information, communication and technology institutions, polytechnics, and many others. The closure of learning institutions due to the COVID-19 pandemic meant that the production of manpower in all sectors of the economy would adversely

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be affected. This study focuses on academic institutions, including primary and secondary schools, and universities. Specifically, the paper investigates the impact of the long closure of schools on private and informal community schools; analyzes the success of the online/remote learning; analyzes the impact of the long closure of schools on teachers, boys and girls; and investigates the learning institution's level of preparedness to implement COVID-19 protocols when the institutions reopened in October 2020.

The problem

The measures taken to combat the COVID-19 pandemic were sudden and unexpected. The long closure of schools, though intended to combat COVID-19, may have led to unintended consequences on the education sector. This study analyses the impact of COVID-19 measures on the education sector. The results of this paper will provide a platform to engage and influence policy makers in charge of education to coordinate the required protocols to prevent the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in learning institutions. It is also expected that the results will provide evidence to minimize the unintended consequences of the measures used to combat COVID-19.

Research results

To gather information on the impact of COVID-19 on education, webinars were used to gather data from students, parents, teachers, owners of private education institutions and policy makers. Online discussions with other researchers doing work related to this topic were held and we exchanged information and learnt from one another. An electronic questionnaire was administered to students, both male and female, parents, teachers, owners of private education institutions, and policy makers. Primary data was also gathered through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with parents, teachers, and education administrators. Oral testimonies were also recorded from the participants. Information was also gathered from key informants on education. FGDs were held under strict Ministry of Health COVID-19 protocols in open spaces, with participants sanitized and provided with masks.

The study used purposive sampling and oversampled Nairobi since it accounted for 43.3% of COVID-19 cases in Kenya. The first COVID-19 measures taken by the Government closed off the Nairobi Metropolitan and people could not leave its boundaries and outsiders could not enter the Metropolitan. The effects of the COVID-19 measures were therefore expected to impact more the people living in the city and its surroundings. It was also easier to conduct and use an electronic questionnaire and conduct FGDs during the day and be home early in the city without breaking curfew hours. A total of 122 electronic questionnaires were sent by email and 61 participants responded, giving a response rate of 50%. The respondents to the

electronic questionnaire were chosen from a list of emails from the author's emailing list, since physical face to face interviews were hard to conduct at that time as many people were working from home.

Information was also sourced from 12 participants in FGDs from Kawangware, Kibera, and Mathare all in Nairobi; 20 key informants who included heads of learning institutions, Ministry of Education, Education in Emergency, private owners of learning institutions, and consultants in the Ministry of Education; and 10 students. The students were 2 from public universities, 2 from public secondary schools in urban areas and 2 from rural areas. There were 2 students from private secondary schools in urban areas and 2 from rural areas.

Village and church elders from the three informal settlements were used to identify the FGD participants. Participants were asked how the measures taken by the government to combat COVID-19 had impacted on them, depending on whether they were students, parents, owners of private schools and administrators of public schools, including community schools. Questions were also asked on whether they had the technology for remote learning and whether the students learnt during long closure of schools.

Key informants were asked questions on government funding of public schools and their opinion on the level of preparedness of schools to implement the COVID-19 protocols when schools opened at the beginning of October 2020. The primary data was thereafter transcribed, grouped into themes, analyzed then presented in narratives to complement the secondary data, which is presented in tables and graphs.

Lessons learnt

- Although government allocation of funds to public schools comprises a large proportion of its budget, it still remains below the recommended 20% of the national budget.
- Although the government allocated Ksh 7 billion to support private/community schools, it took long for this money to reach the schools that were facing financial difficulties.
- The permanent closure of many private schools led to more overcrowding of existing public schools.
- Long closure of community schools exposed girls and boys to vices such as drug and alcohol abuse that exist in informal settlements.

- In the education sector, the existing policy of 100% transition is a good idea since it ensures equality of the right to education to all. However, the level of bureaucracy that exists in disbursement of funds to public schools to meet their needs, such as for more infrastructure, hiring of more teachers and many others, leads to delay and is reflected in the lack of preparedness of these schools when they re-opened in January 2021 .
- Very little online teaching and learning took place during the pandemic as the resources and equipment were not available.
- A number of students did not report back to school when they re-opened, because the long closure of schools disrupted the academic calendar and some students got engaged in other business not related to academics, while others, especially girls, got pregnant or got married.
- There was an increase in the number of adolescent pregnancies in Kenya, attributed to the long closure of schools due to COVID-19 measures.
- COVID-19 measures led to an increase in the number of early child marriages in Kenya.
- Teachers were also adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as a number of them lost their jobs, especially those in private schools and those in public schools employed by Boards of Management (BOMs). A number of them also contracted COVID-19 while others succumbed to the disease.

Implications for policy makers

Short run

Strengthen curriculum: The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development needs to strengthen the curriculum and school syllabus that addresses child rights, reproductive health and sex education in schools to empower children to speak out against violations of their rights, and other abuses.

School-based child-friendly GBV reporting mechanism: School managements need to establish a school-based child friendly GBV reporting mechanism.

Medium term

Guidance and counseling: Considering that students and teachers lost some of their own due to COVID-19, and some students had already entered the world of

work without restrictions as they face in a school setting, there is need to have well trained guidance and counseling staff in schools to help both teachers and students face the challenges that they may face as they try to adjust to school life. There is also need for education sector agencies to deepen the existing structures of guidance and counseling, with a special focus on online guidance and counseling targeting educational, vocational and personal/social life of learners at all levels of education service.

Out of school programmes: The Department of Child Services and Department of Culture needs to formulate, plan and implement out-of-school programmes for children across the country to keep them occupied.

GBV safe houses: The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and non-state actors need to urgently establish safe houses for children who experience GBV and other forms of violations.

Regulation on sale of alcohol: There is need for strict regulation of the sale of alcoholic beverages and drinks, and drugs.

Work life balance: There is need to come up with work/life balance programmes for parents aimed at improving care and support of their children during this pandemic, and any other that may come in future.

Long term

Address level of bureaucracy: The government needs to increase the infrastructure in public schools to take care of those students who used to study in private schools that have now closed permanently. This can be done by addressing the level of bureaucracy that leads to delay in disbursement of funds allocated to public schools. Alternative funding model of private schools: Private schools need to look for an alternative funding model instead of only relying on fees paid by students. Private schools complement government efforts in providing education. Therefore, the government should treat them the same way as small and medium enterprises in terms of support.

Community schools: In case of another long closure due to a pandemic, it is important for the government to take over community schools and continue protecting the children in these schools to prevent them from being exposed to the vices that exist in informal settlements. As it is now, most of these community schools rely on donor funding.

Remote/online teaching and learning: There is need to increase electricity, and internet connectivity to all households in Kenya to increase the level of online/remote

learning not only during a pandemic but also in normal times. At the same time, the government should revisit the idea of every child having a tablet, since this study found that very few students were able to access online study due to lack of smart phones. The pandemic has presented an opportunity for schools to embrace online learning to complement in-person classroom learning and to train teachers and students in digital skills in the fast-changing world of technology.



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