

**TEACHERS PREPAREDNESS AND DIGITAL
LEARNING MANAGEMENT IN POST-COVID-19: A
CASE STUDY OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
NORTHBANK SETTLEMENT, MAKURDI, BENUE
STATE**

Ruth Uju Ibeh

Entrepreneurship Development Center, Nigerian Army
College of Environmental Science and Technology, Makurdi,
Benue State.

Email: ruthjuibeh@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines teachers' preparedness and digital learning management in secondary schools within the NorthBank settlement of Makurdi, Benue State, in the post-COVID-19 era. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed significant weaknesses in school management, infrastructure, and digital capacity, disrupting teaching and learning across the community. Using a survey research design, data were collected from 370 teachers and principals in public and private secondary schools to assess challenges, strategies, and management responses adopted during and after the pandemic. Findings revealed that inadequate ICT infrastructure, poor internet connectivity, insufficient teacher training, and lack of digital tools hindered the continuity of learning. Despite these constraints, some schools adopted innovative local approaches, such as community learning centers and mobile-based communication for instruction. The study concludes that sustainable educational recovery in NorthBank requires targeted investment in ICT infrastructure, continuous digital skills training for teachers, and stronger policy frameworks for crisis management. Recommendations include promoting digital inclusivity, building adaptive management capacity, and ensuring psychosocial support for teachers and students to enhance post-pandemic educational resilience.

Keywords: COVID-19, School management, Makurdi, Post-pandemic Recovery, Educational Resilience.

Introduction

In the Benue State Education Policy, aligned with the National Policy on Education (2013), secondary education is described as the stage of learning for students aged 11–17 after completing primary and junior secondary schooling, and before advancing to tertiary institutions. Its core aim is to prepare learners for higher education, self-reliance, and responsible citizenship. In NorthBank Community, Makurdi, secondary education is central to youth development and community progress. However, any disruption in school management and learning activities at this level can greatly affect the educational and socio-economic outcomes of the community. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in late 2019 disrupted global education systems, including those in Benue State. The World Health Organization (2020) defines a pandemic as a large-scale disease outbreak that spreads internationally, causing social and economic instability. COVID-19, caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, emerged in Wuhan, China, and quickly became a global crisis that affected millions.

According to the World Health Organization (2020), it is defined by the extensive spread of an infectious or contagious disease, which raises the risk of serious sickness, death, and social unrest on a worldwide basis. A global pandemic is a disease outbreak that spreads over a large geographic area, usually spanning international borders and impacting a sizable amount of the world's population. The word "pandemic" highlights the outbreak's worldwide scope and the effects it has on different nations and areas around the world. Numerous noteworthy instances of worldwide pandemics that have had a profound effect on human populations and society have been documented worldwide. Insufficient funding makes it difficult for the government to supply schools with resources and equipment, and it is clear that the general goals of secondary education will not be achieved if funding is insufficient (Thomas

et al., 2004). Bello (2021) suggests that this is one of the reasons the government is promoting private sector involvement in secondary school funding. It is undeniable that the coronavirus may have affected many facets of human life as well as school administration, particularly in the areas of personnel welfare, extracurricular activities, finances, physical facility provision, and teaching and learning. Psychosocial support is also necessary to help students deal with these difficulties and maintain their wellbeing (Nneji et al., 2022). This is why the study is being conducted to determine how the coronavirus affects secondary school administration.

In Makurdi, particularly within the NorthBank area, the pandemic led to the closure of schools, interruption of face-to-face teaching, and loss of academic time. Many schools lacked access to digital learning platforms, and teachers were not adequately trained for remote education delivery. The crisis further exposed poor infrastructure, limited funding, and gaps in administrative preparedness. As Faremi and Adeleke (2022) observed, there is a need for policy reforms that promote digital learning, equitable access to educational resources, and psychosocial support for students and teachers. This study therefore examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the management of secondary schools in NorthBank Community, Makurdi, highlighting the challenges faced, strategies adopted, and lessons for building resilience in education management.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the extent of teachers' preparedness for effective digital learning management in secondary schools within the NorthBank settlement of Makurdi, Benue State, in the post-COVID-19 era.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- i. To examine the challenges faced by secondary school managers in NorthBank Community during the COVID-

- 19 pandemic.
- ii. To evaluate the strategies and interventions adopted to manage secondary education during and after the pandemic.
 - iii. To assess the impact of these management responses on learning continuity, equity, and educational outcomes.
 - iv. To propose evidence-based recommendations for building a resilient and inclusive secondary education management system in NorthBank settlement.

Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed serious management weaknesses in secondary schools across the NorthBank Community of Makurdi. The closure of schools disrupted teaching and learning activities for months. Most schools lacked facilities for online classes, and even where digital devices existed, poor internet connectivity and power supply limited their use. Teachers were largely unprepared for remote teaching, and administrators had little prior experience with managing education during emergencies. Government interventions such as radio lessons and catch-up programs were introduced but had minimal reach in NorthBank due to inadequate communication infrastructure and limited awareness. Furthermore, psychosocial stress, learning loss, and reduced student engagement persisted after school reopening. Despite these challenges, some schools adopted creative local strategies to sustain learning. Challenges such as inadequate ICT infrastructure, unreliable electricity, and limited teacher training hindered effective technology integration in many schools (**Emovavwerhe and Peretomode, 2023**). Despite the availability of ICT tools, many teachers lacked the necessary skills to utilize them effectively *Adegboyega, (2023)*. However, little is known about the effectiveness of these management responses and how lessons learned can be applied to improve resilience in future crises. This study therefore seeks to investigate the management responses to COVID-19 in NorthBank secondary schools, assess their impact on learning continuity

and outcomes, and propose evidence-based strategies for stronger, more inclusive school management systems.

Significance of the Research

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform the development of more resilient and effective secondary education management systems within the study scope in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. By examining the challenges and adaptive strategies employed during the crisis, the study provides critical insights for policymakers, educators, and administrators aiming to enhance educational planning, digital integration, and crisis preparedness. It highlights the urgent need for improved infrastructure, teacher capacity building, and inclusive policies to bridge gaps in access and quality, especially in underserved areas. Ultimately, the study contributes to national and regional efforts to build a more equitable, adaptable, and future-ready education system.

Scope of the Research

This study focuses on the management of secondary education in NorthBank Communities in the context of the post-COVID-19 era, with particular attention to the challenges, adaptations, and policy responses that emerged during and after the pandemic. It examines key areas such as school leadership, digital learning integration, teacher preparedness, infrastructure development, and stakeholder engagement. The study is limited to selected public and private secondary schools within Northbank settlement, Makurdi, Benue State in Nigeria to capture a representative understanding of diverse experiences and outcomes. It does not cover primary or tertiary education but draws implications that may indirectly inform broader educational policy.

Review of Related Empirical Studies

In 2021, Eze and Okeke investigated how the coronavirus epidemic affected the mental health of pupils in southeast Nigeria. For the study, three distinct goals were established. To

direct the investigation, three research questions and three null hypotheses were developed. A sample of 303 university students who agreed to participate in the study were examined using an ex post facto research design. Ferreira and Schady (2009) investigated the impact of COVID-19 epidemic measures on secondary school students' educational development in Nigeria's Cross River State, specifically in Calabar South Local Government Area. A related study was carried out by Jegede in 2020 at Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja, to evaluate how parents perceived the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic school closure on secondary school pupils. Three defined objectives with matching research questions served as the study's compass. A descriptive survey research design was used for this investigation. The study's sample consisted of 450 parents whose children attend secondary schools in the Area Council, and concluded that the pandemic experience was not appealing. Kappo and Adeyemi (2020); Oyediran et al., (2020) investigated the impact of school closures during the COVID-19 epidemic on learning loss. The study evaluated the effect of school closures on primary school performance using exceptionally rich data from The Netherlands. Nweze and Okolie, (2021) investigated the challenges posed by and the impacts of COVID-19 on Education in Nigeria. A sequential exploratory mixed method design was adopted for the study. Two instruments were developed and used to collect data for the study, Summary of their findings revealed that Coronavirus pandemic has caused anxiety and depression to many students. It was also found that Covid-19 has a devastating effect on the psychological state and academic success of students. It was also discovered that Covid-19 has slightly different effect on males and females. The reviewed study is relevant to the present study because it is concerned with the effect of Covid-19, however, both studies differ in terms of location.

Research Questions

The following question aligned with the objectives guided the study, they are:

- i. What were the major challenges encountered by education managers at NorthBank secondary schools during the COVID-19 pandemic era?
- ii. What strategies and interventions were implemented to manage secondary education during and after the pandemic, and how effective were they?
- iii. What lessons can be drawn from the NorthBank school's experience to inform future educational policies and practices for resilience?

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study followed the sequence using research design, instrument for data collection, and data analysis techniques.

Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design. Survey research design is a type of design in which group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few considered being the representative of the entire group. This design was appropriate because it allowed the collection of quantitative data from a sample of secondary school teachers, principals, and administrators within secondary schools in NorthBank Community. It facilitated the identification of patterns, challenges, and management responses during and after the pandemic. It also permits the collection of data from respondents in the natural setting, and enables the researcher to collect reliable data from a significant number of the population objectively.

Population and Sample

The population comprised teachers and principals from public and private secondary schools in NorthBank settlement in Makurdi metropolis. A total of 370 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across 3 different secondary schools and ownership structures.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire named: "Teachers Preparedness and Digital Learning Management in Post-Covid-19: A Case Study of Secondary Schools in NorthBank Settlement Questionnaire (TPDLMP:NSQ)." The instrument is constructed by the researcher based on the objectives of the study and from the literatures reviewed. All the clusters in the questionnaire have five items each that are relating to the research question that guided the study. It contained sections on challenges, management strategies, digital adaptation, and post-pandemic recovery. Responses were rated on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics specifically, Mean and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions. A criterion Means of 2.50 was used, items with mean 2.50 were accepted, while those < 2.50 were rejected. Analyses were conducted using SPSS software to ensure reliability and accuracy, referring that a cluster Mean of 2.50 or above was regarded as High Influence, and a Mean of less than 2.50 as Low Influence. A computer program called the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to conduct the analysis.

Results and Discussion

The results were presented and analyzed in line with the research questions raised and hypotheses formulated for the study within the scope of the study (Table 1). Results indicating summary of the impact of Corona-Virus on the provision of physical facilities in the various secondary schools.

Table 1: Impact of Corona-Virus on the provision of physical

| S/N | Items | N | Mean | SD | Remark |
|-----|---|-----|------|------|--------|
| 1 | Coronavirus hindered the building of classrooms | 370 | 2.96 | 1.01 | Agree |
| 2 | Coronavirus hindered the building of libraries | 370 | 3.12 | 0.90 | Agree |
| 3 | Coronavirus hindered the building of laboratories | 370 | 3.15 | 0.93 | Agree |
| 4 | Coronavirus affected office spaces development | 370 | 3.04 | 0.89 | Agree |
| 5 | Coronavirus hindered the building of toilet facilities | 370 | 3.09 | 1.02 | Agree |
| 6 | There has been a noticeable reduction in the quality of maintenance of school facilities due to corona virus | 370 | 3.14 | 0.95 | Agree |
| 7 | School has struggled to provide adequate sanitation facilities due to the challenges posed by the Coronavirus pandemic. | 370 | 3.10 | 0.91 | Agree |
| | Cluster Mean | | 3.08 | | Agree |

The figures in Table 1 revealed that respondents agreed on all items, with mean scores above the benchmark of 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.08 indicates that COVID-19 significantly affected the provision and maintenance of physical facilities in secondary schools across NorthBank Community. Respondents noted that many schools faced delays in renovation projects, reduced government funding, and poor maintenance during the lockdown. Further analysis showed that digital learning adoption was minimal, with fewer than 20% of schools able to use online platforms due to poor internet access and lack of training. Teachers also expressed difficulty in adapting teaching materials for remote instruction. However, some schools leveraged WhatsApp groups and community learning centers as temporary solutions.

These findings are crucial for guiding future educational reforms and ensuring resilience in the face of future challenges. By addressing these areas, Nigeria can strengthen its secondary education system and build resilience against future disruptions. Meanwhile, the observations were that the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted academic and administrative activities in secondary schools across NorthBank Community. Most schools lacked ICT facilities and internet connectivity for online or blended learning, also the teachers had limited digital literacy skills, which hindered the effective use of e-learning

tools. Funding for maintenance and facility improvement declined during the pandemic period. There is a need for policy and management reforms to integrate ICT into teaching and learning in NorthBank schools. The study agrees with Nweze and Okolie, (2021) and Eze and Okeke (2021) that Covid-19 has a devastating effect on the psychological state and academic success of students, therefore psychosocial support for students is importance for recovery.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study underscores the urgent need for community-based reforms to improve resilience in the local education system. The pandemic revealed critical weaknesses in infrastructure, digital readiness, and administrative response. To build a more sustainable system, NorthBank secondary schools must adopt adaptive management practices, invest in ICT resources, enhance teacher digital literacy, and strengthen psychosocial support for learners. A coordinated effort between the Benue State Ministry of Education, school administrators, parents, and the private sector is vital for ensuring that schools can withstand future disruptions.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- i. The Benue State Government and education stakeholders should prioritize funding for ICT facilities, including stable internet access, power supply, and learning devices for schools in NorthBank.
- ii. Regular teacher training should be introduced on digital pedagogy, blended learning, and crisis-responsive teaching.
- iii. Community partnerships should be strengthened to provide shared access to educational resources such as community ICT centers and mobile learning hubs.
- iv. School leaders should receive capacity-building in

- adaptive and data-driven management practices.
- v. Establish mental health and psychosocial support programs to help students and staff recover from stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic.
- vi. Local education authorities should implement monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track progress in post-pandemic recovery and ensure sustainability.

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