

COVID-19 Pandemic: Educational Disruption in Africa

Faisal Muhammad^{1*}

¹MPH of Epidemiology, Department of Public Health, Daffodil International University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Received: 2020 May 10; Revised: 2020 May 22; Accepted: 2020 May 23; Published online: 2020 August 21

*Corresponding author: Department of Public Health, Daffodil International University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. E-mail: fokkanya@yahoo.com

Citation: Muhammad F. COVID-19 Pandemic: Educational Disruption in Africa. Strides Dev Med Educ. 2020 September;17,Suppl:e91028. doi:10.22062/sdme.2020.91028

Keywords:

Electronic Learning, Online Education, Perspective, Students

Dear Editor,

The coronavirus diseases pandemic (COVID-19) has affected educational systems across the globe. This pandemic problem leads to closures of most of the learning centers including colleges and universities. As of 18 April 2020, it was estimated that about 1.7 billion learners have been affected globally (1). In response to that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) suggested the use of distance learning programs and open educational applications and platforms where teachers can use to reach learners and limit the disruption of educational system worldwide (2).

Africa has taken the coronavirus pandemic seriously, following the confirmation of its first cases. Initial responses included the closure of schools, colleges and universities. The most important issues that hold serious implications in confronting the COVID-19 pandemic are online teaching, which is now being introduced as an alternative method to provide the educational content, and the economic consequences of the pandemic on African higher education. The UNESCO reports millions of African learners are experiencing disruption in their studies due to the closure of their learning institutions (3). The pandemic issue has triggered institutions to move their courses online. However, online learning is not that simple in Africa where only 24.0% of the population has access to the internet, and poor connectivity. To an increasing extent, the universities and higher education institutions are collaborating with internet providers and governments to conquer this challenge by negotiating zero-rated access to specific educational and websites. The effects of the pandemic on Africa's education system cannot be overemphasized. If the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it may seriously impact the commitment of governments toward the higher education development (3).

In present time a lot of efforts have been made to transform higher education in Africa, however the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to destabilize the educational situation in this continent. The pathology and health consequences associated with COVID-19 must be studied, nevertheless the impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) on medical education is yet to be known.

As a result of COVID-19 pandemic many medical students have missed a lot of opportunities; because they have been sent home as part of infection control. Medical students are the future healthcare providers, they are supposed to be engaged in learning through direct patient care.

Medical students are also learning during this time through distance education, however this is a huge challenge for them to be adapted. Medical education deals with training in the hospital wards as well as some clinical rotations, this has proved that it's not designed to be fully online.

Education providers across the globe - including in Africa, are racing to launch remote learning options. Some countries across the world have prepared as much as they could to provide 'learning at a distance' during this pandemic, however in Africa most of the people are living in rural areas and will struggle to access distance learning. Due to the current response of the

COVID-19 outbreak, the future of millions of learners in Africa is at stake. Though the disease may disappear over time (sooner or later).

Conflict of Interests: Non

Ethical Approvals: Not applicable

Funding/Support: Non

References

1. UNESCO. "COVID-19 Educational Disruption and Response". March 04, 2020. [Cited 2020 March 04]. Available from: <https://en.unesco.org>

org/covid19/educationresponse [Accessed on April 20, 2020].

2. UNESCO. "290 million students out of school due to COVID-19: UNESCO releases first global numbers and mobilizes response". March 4, 2020. [Cited 2020 March 04]. Available from: [https://en.unesco.org/news/290-million-students-out-school-due-covid-19-unesco-](https://en.unesco.org/news/290-million-students-out-school-due-covid-19-unesco-releasesfirst-global-numbers-and-mobilizes)

[releasesfirst-global-numbers-and-mobilizes](https://en.unesco.org/news/290-million-students-out-school-due-covid-19-unesco-releasesfirst-global-numbers-and-mobilizes) [Accessed on April 20, 2020].

3. Wondwosen Tamrat and Damtew Teferra. COVID-19 poses a serious threat to higher education. 09 April 2020. [Cited 2020 April 09]. Available from: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200409103755715> [Accessed on April 18, 2020].