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IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON BASIC EDUCATION IN GHANA- A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE GREATER ACCRA REGION

BY

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**THIS DISSERTATION PROPOSAL PRESENTED TO THE SCHOOL OF
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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is the result of my own effort. Sources to which I am indebted are duly acknowledged in the references. I further declare that this work has never been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

GIFTY KABUKIE ZIKPI
Student's Name	Signature	Date

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this dissertation was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation work laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

DR. KOFI AMPONSAH-BEDIAKO
Supervisor's Name	Signature	Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation proposal to my husband, Squadron Leader Cyril Mawutor Zikpi, for his selfless dedication to my welfare and the family. I am also grateful for all his support, including helping me with my assignments, becoming my study partner especially since I became pregnant. I am also indebted to you for bearing the cost of my post-graduate studies.

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May the good lord continue to bless you all and may you be filled with heavenly joy from above.

Amen!

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ABSTRACT

The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic has led to various destabilizations of the curriculum of various educational institutions around the world. It has been revealed that the pandemic impacted negatively on student's learning, performances, grades, academic calendar and the delivery of teaching and learning materials. The severe impact of the pandemic was felt by all global economies and various sectors further worsening the plight of many developing countries who had to close their borders due to the spread of the virus. This led to the various government temporarily closing down educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The research study employed a qualitative methodological approach utilizing a personal interview technique. Using a purposive sample of 8 primary basic schools within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana were selected. The findings from the study reveals that the various schools were largely unprepared when it came to the government's decision to close down school. The findings largely reveal that there was a massive impact on academic calendar, student's learning progress, teaching and learning, educational targets, lessons plans and class preparation which resulted in poor grades recorded, academic decline, loss of knowledge and skills acquired.

The impact of the academic calendar revealed that the academic calendar of all schools were generally affected but the findings further reveals that private schools were more pragmatic in improvising a system that would work for them since the closure of schools disrupted the academic calendar. The nature of disruption of the academic calendar led to most public schools not able to continue and so had to start all over again while most private schools had a more effective plan which incorporated an intervention plan in order to recover any loss of knowledge, skill and lesson plans.

Despite some moderate efforts made to have a virtual class, it was not as effective as the face-to-face interaction that would have taken place. The findings also reveal that children found it difficult to adapt to the new ways of doing things particularly those from low income homes and had to rely on their parents who were not always present at home. Also, teachers found it difficult to deliver teaching and learning effectively due to limited resources as books online were not particularly guided by the books in school. The study also found out that most private schools put in some intervention plan for the lost periods of study in order to meet designed educational targets and curriculum requirements. The study also found out that some category of students who were much affected included the very poor ones

The study findings showed that most students were not able to socialize and as a result became isolated from their friends impacting on their social well-being, some students also were unstable emotionally as they could not know their fate in relation to academic targets and some students were scared of removing their nose masks due to the fear of contracting the virus. The objective sought to find out measures put in place to mitigate the impact of the closure of schools on student's learning. Some challenges recorded included poor internet connectivity and accessibility, ineffective virtual classes, school dropouts, financial demands, inability to travel during this period, backlog of academic work, unpaid salaries and in some instance halved salaries. The findings of the study reveal the disruptive nature of the closure of schools due to the spread of the coronavirus.

CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCH DESIGN

1.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a background to the research problem and the problem statement. It also situates the theoretical framework and explains the methodology used for the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic has led to various destabilizations of the curriculum of various educational institutions around the world. It has been revealed that the pandemic impacted negatively on student's learning, performances, grades, academic calendar and the delivery of teaching and learning materials. The severe impact of the pandemic was felt by all global economies and various sectors further worsening the plight of many developing countries that had to close their borders due to the spread of the virus. This led to various governments temporarily closing down educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

These nationwide closures impacted over 91% of the worlds' student population. In India too, the government as a part of the nationwide lockdown had to close all educational institutions, as a consequence of which, learners ranging from school going children to postgraduate students, were affected. School closures impacted not only students, teachers, and families, but have had far-reaching economic and societal consequences which are still being felt. The impact was more severe for disadvantaged children and their families, causing interrupted learning, compromised nutrition, childcare problems, and consequent economic cost to families who could not work

(Verma and Prakash, 2020). It has been predicted that a possible academic loss would be recorded which would have a long term effect on academic gains made by learners due to school closures.

The emergence of the coronavirus disease took place in Wuhan, China in 2019. It was later coded “COVID-19” by the W.H.O which stands for Coronavirus Disease 2019. The Coronavirus outbreak remains one of the worst global pandemics for decades. The mortality rate soared and the ease of spread was upsetting. Research shows that older people and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer were more likely to develop serious illnesses from coronavirus (W.H.O, 2020).

The World Bank, (2020), predicted a major global recession, due to declines in production, investment, employment and trade as a result of the outbreak of the novel coronavirus. Globally, the pandemic affected educational systems resulting in the widespread closures of schools and universities. It is believed that the primary department of various schools was the most affected due to a halt in the academic calendar. This is likely to affect their academic progress and psychological well-being. At their age, they require a conducive atmosphere to grow, learn and interact with their peers but this was not the case due to the spread of COVID-19 posing a threat to their health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had substantial repercussions in almost every sphere of human life, including its ‘social, cultural, political, educational, psychological, and interpersonal aspects (Markowska-Manista and Zakrzewska-Olędzka 2020: 93). Many scholars, scientists, and analysts have been conducting studies of the pandemic’s influence on various fields, including migration (Sirkeci and Yucesahin 2020), education (Ministertwo Edukacji Narodowej 2020; OECD 2020; UNESCO 2020), and families (Darmody 2020; WHO 2020). Studies with young people and children reveal the impact on the learning/teaching process, children’s well-being, and how

families function during times of chaos and disorganization caused by restrictions and limitations (Markowska-Manista and Zakrzewska-Olędzka 2020).

Social practices are repetitive actions that emphasize the reproduction of traditional meanings, previously established skills, and certain tools and technologies (Spurling et al. 2013) and thus, these practices make history (Kemmis et al. 2014). The importance of the schooling environment to kids is crucial in their elementary years as it forms a critical period in the schooling system. Therefore, the closure leads to the deprivation of children from opportunities for learning as they grow. This tends to disrupt the learning progress of under-privileged learners who tend to face many difficulties and would thus have a lot to catch up with in relation to their academic targets. It would therefore negatively affect skills gained, repetitive actions and the application of specific tools and technologies in the learning process of primary school children.

Welch (2016) mentions different types of practices, that is, specialist practices (going to work or school), cultural practices (socializing outside the home; visiting cultural sites; attending church or community meetings), everyday practices (daily routines, driving, or walking), and domestic practices (running a household to raising a family). These types of social practices reflect children's practices in the following way: specialist (learning), cultural (maintaining interpersonal skills and social contacts), everyday (daily routines), and domestic (relationships with parents and siblings). This process of learning is essential in the life of kids at the primary stage of education as they need these social and life skills in order to grow to become independent individuals.

As a form of a measure to contain the virus, most countries resorted to the implementation of lockdown measures which led to border closures, with no flight entering the country. As a result, various schools had to close which led to the disruption of their regular academic session and calendar for the school year. There was a greater probability of a high school dropout rate due to

the closures of schools which would entail a policy response to get these school kids back to the classroom.

There was also the problem of missing out on social contact which is essential for the growth of young people. Parents during this period did not have a choice than to facilitate learning at home for their kids in order for that their wards do not lose out on learning. Data released by UNESCO, (2020) on 25 March, indicate that, school and university closures due to COVID-19 were implemented nationwide in 165 countries. These closures according to the organization, has affected over 1.5 billion students worldwide. Researchers at the Brookings Institute (2020) have made some projections, basing their estimations on past school closures related to weather-related hazards such as Hurricane Katrina among others.

These projections were also related to usual summer holidays, and the MAP Growth tests normally administered throughout the year. Their models identify some worrying points. Most students are likely to be well behind in their learning, especially in mathematics and science, but also in literary subjects. At the beginning of the school year, there will be much more variability in students' skills, and students who are already getting low grades will be particularly impacted. This is expected in the learning progress of students as most of them would have had challenges with the disruption with their studies and academic calendar thereby shifting their focus.

Economists at the University of Bristol (2020) have tried to quantify the potential cognitive impact that stopping school due to COVID-19 will have. By extrapolating from the studies by Carlsson et al (2015) and Lavy (2015), published well before the start of the COVID-19 crisis, they nevertheless estimate the order of magnitude of the impact that this disruption will have on student learning. Using the two different methods mentioned in the studies above, the economists

estimate a drop in test results of about 6% of the standard deviation after 12 weeks of confinement without schooling.

This is not negligible: indeed, lower scores on standardized tests are correlated with greater difficulty in finding a job, and lower pay, especially true for tests near the end of a teenager's schooling. Little is known about the effectiveness of learning at home for the entire student population and what this means for the development of skills. However, there are indications from multiple countries that many children had little effective instruction. For a significant proportion of pupils, learning during school closures was apparently almost non-existent. For example, early tracking data from an online mathematics application used in a number of US school districts prior to COVID-19 suggest that the learning progress of students has suffered a strong decline during the crisis, especially in schools in low-income areas (Chetty et al., 2020).

For Germany, a survey of parents of school children shows that the time that children spent on school-related activities per day was halved during the COVID-19 school-closure period, from 7.4 to 3.6 hours (Woessmann et al., 2020). Indeed, 38% of students studied for school for no more than two hours per day, 74% for no more than four hours. By contrast, the time spent with TV, computer games, and mobile phones (passive activities) increased to 5.2 hours per day. For children whose parents were more educated, the decline in school activities was similar to that of other children, although the increase in passive activities was slightly smaller. Low-achieving students in particular replaced learning with passive activities.

Only 6% of students had group online lessons on a daily basis, more than half had them less than once a week. Students had individual contact with their teachers even less often. The standard learning tool was task sheets that students received weekly processing. In sum, learning opportunities were significantly reduced during the school closures, and the reductions were

greatest for disadvantaged children. Moreover, it is known from many studies (such as the analyses of skill development) that learning is a dynamic process that builds on prior learning.

As such when the learner experiences obstacles or stagnation, it would lead to growing deficits. This deficit further worsens student's academic gains as the skills and knowledge acquired is lost due to disruption of the school calendar. It is therefore incumbent on policy makers and stakeholders within the educational sector to adopt pragmatic measures that would ensure that learners are engaged through interventions such as smart teaching resources and home schooling activities geared towards the recovery of time lost.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The global closures of schools, led to the disruption of the academic calendar of many schools across the world. This led to the destabilization of the curriculum of various schools in Ghana. It has been revealed that the pandemic impacted negatively on student's learning, performances, grades, academic calendar and the delivery of teaching and learning materials. This led to the Government of Ghana introducing a nationwide lockdown measure in order to curb the spread of the coronavirus to various schools thereby posing a threat to public health.

The importance of the schooling environment to kids is crucial in their elementary years as it forms a critical period in the schooling system. Therefore, the closure leads to the deprivation of children from opportunities for learning as they grow. As a consequence of which, learners ranging from school going children in the primary education unit were mostly affected as a result of the closures of schools, which would have long term impact on their developmental growth and academic progress. The impact was more severe on disadvantaged children and their families, causing interrupted learning, compromised nutrition, childcare problems, and consequent economic cost to families who could not work (Verma and Prakash, 2020). The problem was far

worsened when some employers had to lay-off workers affecting the income of vulnerable families.

According to Kuhfeld et al. (2020) school closures are likely to have led to significant learning losses in math and reading. However, they estimate heterogeneous effects, and conclude that high-performing students are likely to make gains. Likewise, Chetty et al., (2020) find that, post-COVID student progress on an online math program decreased significantly more in poorer ZIP codes. As a result, various schools had to close which led to the disruption of their regular academic session and calendar for the school year. It is expected that the disruption of the academic calendar would have long term effects on student's performances, if long term solutions are not found.

1.3 Research Questions

This research study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How did schools react to the closure of schools nationwide by the Government of Ghana?
2. How did the closure of schools due to the spread of COVID-19 on students' learning and teaching?
3. How has the school been able to mitigate the impact of academic losses and learning progress of students?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This research study seeks to address the following research objectives. Therefore, this study seeks to:

1. Ascertain schools' reaction to the closure of schools nationwide by the Government of Ghana.
2. Examine the impact of the closure of schools on students' learning and teaching due to the spread of COVID-19.
3. Assess the efforts of various schools in mitigating the impact of academic losses and learning progress of student's.

1.5 Arrangement of Chapter (s)

This study would be organized along five main chapters. Chapter one of the study would focus on the background to the research, research questions, objectives, scope and rationale of the study, the theoretical framework, sources of data and research methodology. Chapter two would provide a literature review of COVID-19 and its impact on primary education.

It would specifically focus on primary schools in the Greater Accra Region. Chapter three would capture the methodology used to collect data on the field while chapter four would involve discussions of the findings. The last chapter, which is chapter five would look at the summary of the findings and provide recommendations to guide policy making within the educational sector particularly primary education in the country.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the literature that is related to the current study. It looks at prior studies that have been done relating to the research problem and also literature that is relevant to the research questions. The aim here is to bring understanding in how the pandemic has impacted on learners in the primary school stage of the educational curriculum. The theoretical foundations of this study are also extensively discussed. This chapter therefore looks at the theoretical review which explains the major concepts in this study further, followed by an empirical literature review of the study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Social Practice Theory (Social Practice Theory within Educational Studies)

Social practices theory has a long history and a broad application in a variety of fields, including daily life (Shove et al. 2012), education (Kemmis et al. 2014), and learning (Alkemeyer and Burschmann 2017; Lave and Wenger 1991). The roots of the theory of social practices lie in Bourdieu's (1977: 82) concept of habitus, described as a 'product of history, [that] produces individual and collective practices'.

The theory of social practices has been broadly employed by Theodore Schatzki (1996, 2005) to understanding practices of individuals and groups. Theodore sees these practices as repetitive doings, happening at certain space–time arrangements (Schatzki 2003), through which one improves their abilities and skills. When the practices become common for all the groups, they are

called collective practices (Welch 2016). Children's collective practices are shaped by their daily routines and group activities organized at educational institutions.

Kemmis et al. (2014) distinguished three arrangements of social practices (cultural- discursive, material-economic, and social-political). These arrangements of social practices exist in sequential dimensions (semantic space, physical space–time, and social space). In such space structures, at home and in school the three dimensions' overlap. Both home and school are spaces where children share their activities, knowledge, and feelings with family and classmates. These spaces enable children to learn through action-oriented processes that involve the use of the playground, extra-curricular activities such as sports, art, gifted and talented programs.

They also constitute the physical space and time that construe the systems where the educational practices are shared and reproduced (Schatzki 2005) and also become vital social spaces to establish and maintain relationships. The contemporary school system has not changed greatly since the mid-nineteenth century. Children acquire their learning practices through a long history of memories and interactions that are based on previously produced social patterns (Kemmis et al. 2014). The classroom becomes a central point in the learning process of the child as he or she progresses.

The classroom as a physical space creates a mental picture that embodies a learning environment for children. Therefore, school is not merely an institution that provides instruction regarding the transition of knowledge and skills between generations, but also a space where school participants from various positions interact while jointly performing practices (Alkemeyer and Burschmann 2017). For many children, especially those who have experienced a transition from one school, place of residence, or even from one country to another, the school often becomes the only place to establish and maintain their social lives. It is also the only place to learn and share educational

practices, as many parents are unable to adequately support their children for a variety of reasons (being new themselves to the local language, school culture, and their adaptations).

Moreover, peers and school become important socialization agents (Popyk et al. 2019) and anchors in a host country not only for migrant children but also for their parents (Grzymała-Każłowska 2018). The opportunity to interact with peers was limited during the lockdown which deprived them the opportunity for socialization which is considered essential in their stage of physical growth and independency. These kids lost some considerable form of socialization skills during this period of school closures and had to resort to physical spacing within their homes.

Because of the COVID-19 outbreak and schools being shut, spaces were swapped and they stopped serving their traditional functions. The school has temporarily stopped being a place that construes new experiences based on old/traditional ones (Bourdieu 1990). Consequently, the home became the space where children, parents, and teachers performed their practices. Thus, distance learning resulted in a substitution (Spurling et al. 2013) of not only specialist practices – attending school, studying at school, methods of learning, etc. – but also cultural, domestic, and everyday practices.

Regarding the ways to change the educational system, Kemmis et al. (2014: 3) claimed: Education and schooling cannot be other than what they were yesterday and what they are today unless there are some significant transformations of the practices that reproduce schooling as we know it. Thus, the traditional education system needs to be automatically transformed because of the changes to the practices and learning/teaching modes from traditional models to distance learning. In this case, the closure of schools due to the pandemic requires a change in educational policy.

A study detailing the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on families with children in Poland (Markowska- Manista and Zakrzewska-Olędzka 2020: 90) noted: Adults' and children's lives have moved online to an even greater degree, lost their rhythm of traditional preschool, school, and professional functioning. Suddenly, we have been pulled out of our daily rituals and responsibilities and held back in place.

Shove et al.'s (2012) concept of the structure of social practices helps to understand the impact of distance learning on the transformation of practices and the consequences of this transformation. Their concept, which is based on studies of science and technology, consists of the following three elements (mentioned above): material ('things, technology, tangible physical entities'), competence ('skills and know-how'), and meaning ('symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations') (Shove et al. 2012: 14).

The material element discloses the learning/teaching mode at schools; competencies are the skills every actor in the learning/teaching process must acquire to adapt to the material element; meaning signifies the actors' values and attitudes toward their relationships since 'learning [is] embedded in social (power) relations' (Alkemeyer and Burschmann 2017: 14). The material elements play a crucial role in the academic growth of the child as he or she deploys these tools in the learning process. Technology thus facilitates the learning process thereby playing a crucial role as an object of learning.

The meaning elements are translated into the learning process as children acquire key skills in relation to symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations based on key learning outcomes in the classroom. Educators as actors within these spaces must understand that these elements are not mutually exclusive but interdependent on the other in order to ensure that learning outcomes are holistically measured to gauge learner's progress.

Shove et al. (2012) state that different correlations between the three elements of the social practices can occur within three different scenarios: before the links are made (proto-practices) when they are made (practices), and after they are broken (ex-practices). Proto-practices existed before implementing distance learning and, thus, there were no links yet between the elements. These proto-practices have been entrenched and sustained within the various educational settings.

In the second scenario, the current process of social practices performed during distance learning illustrates a full integration of the three elements. In the final scenario, however, there are no links between the elements. For the learner to be engaged, educational policy makers should integrate these elements towards the provision of holistic education to meet the changing trends and dynamics occurring within the educational space due to exogenous factors such as Covid-19.

Concretely, this represents the temporary interruption of traditional education and demonstrates what will happen to the social practices of distance learning once the school shutdown ends and children return to school. School children's collective practices (Kemmis et al. 2014) have been substituted by the separate practices of each child, who had to individually manage the new learning process. Hence, collective educational practices have temporarily become ex-practices (Shove et al. 2012).

Thus, children's new individual specialist (learning on distance) and cultural (maintaining social relationships on distance) practices are in the second scenario of the social practice structure (Shove et al. 2012). Furthermore, the spatio-temporal entities (Schatzki 2005) have changed because of the social practices of school children and the new arrangements and shift in the three dimensions (semantic space, physical, space-time, and social space of shared doing and relations) (Kemmis et al. 2014).

This study therefore applies social practice theory, rooted in Schatzki's ontological theory of practices to study the impact of COVID-19 on Basic Education in the Greater Accra Region. It employs the structure of social practices proposed by Shove et al. (2012), which consists of three integrated elements (material, competence, and meaning) to study the changes to children's learning practices and the change in daily routines during the COVID-19 outbreak. This would help in assessing the impact of the pandemic on learner's social practices.

2.2 Overview of the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)

2.2.1 Overview of Coronavirus Disease

Coronavirus Disease is a contagious disease that first emerged in Wuhan, China in 2019. It was later coded "COVID-19" by the W.H.O which stands for Coronavirus Disease 2019. The Coronavirus outbreak remains one of the worst global pandemics for decades. The mortality rate soared and the ease of spread was upsetting. Research shows that older people and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer were more likely to develop serious illnesses from coronavirus (W.H.O, 2020).

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on January 30, 2020 and later as the number of cases and territories reporting cases increased globally, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020. As at July 1st, 2020, over 213 countries were affected with over 10 million cases and 515,000 deaths. The symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, dry cough, headache, sore throat, cold, difficulty in breathing and muscle pain (Cascella et al. 2020, Guo et al. 2019). Coronaviruses are RNA viruses that cause respiratory, hepatic and neurological diseases in domestic and wild animals, and humans. Among humans, six species of coronavirus have been identified to cause disease (Su et al. 2016).

Among these, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) are of zoonotic origin and have been known to cause severe acute respiratory syndrome outbreaks among humans (Zaki et al. 2012, Cui et al. 2019). With increasing human to animal contact and interfaces in recent times, an outbreak of novel zoonotic species of Coronavirus was reported in late 2019 in Wuhan (Wu et al. 2020, Rothan et al. 2020). This has been largely speculated as the leading cause of the spread of the virus pandemic across the world.

The causative pathogen for the outbreak was identified as SARS-Coronavirus-2 which rapidly spread through China and other parts of the world (Wilder-Smith et al. 2020, Chinazzi et al. 2020). The disease was thereafter named COVID-19. The index cases for the country were detected on March 12, 2020 in Greater Accra region. Over 60% of the confirmed cases reported in the Greater Accra Region (11, 348 [63.9%]) followed by the Ashanti Region (3, 003 [16.9%]). By end of June, all 16 regions in the country had recorded cases of COVID-19. Out of 17,763 confirmed cases 13, 190 (74.3%) had recovered as at June 30, 2020. Additionally, of the 4,573 active cases, Greater Accra Region had the highest number of active cases with 2,724. Overall case fatality rate for the country was 0.66.

Some of the symptoms of Coronavirus include; Sore throat, runny nose, constant coughing/sneezing, breathing difficulty and fatigue. The Morphology of the Coronaviruses reveals a club-shaped viral spike pelomers, colored red; create the look of a corona surrounding the virion when observed with an electron (Wikipedia, 2020a -SARSCoV-2 without background.png). However, recent events show that behavioural change can help contain the spread of coronavirus. This is because the virus spreads as one comes into contact with an infected person who has the virus and therefore behaviour was vital to ensuring that the virus does not spread.

Some of the suggested measures to halt the coronavirus pandemic include; improved individual habits such as personal hygiene, including constant washing of hands with alcohol-based sanitizers, good respiratory attitude (close coughing and sneezing), and other personal protection practices like wearing of face mask, social distancing, avoiding touching of the face, and reducing contacts with people through self-isolation at home or avoiding nonessential travels or gatherings. Coronavirus is a global problem that requires more action coordination and global cooperation to successfully contain the outbreak and to deal with its aftermath effects.

2.2.2 Regional Index Cases

The first index cases were reported in the Greater Accra Region. Both cases were imported cases from Turkey and Norway. The next three regions to record cases were the Ashanti, Central and Western Regions before the disease were recorded progressively in other regions. Of the sixteen regions, the index cases for 8 regions (50%) were local index cases (Kenu et al. 2020). During this period, swift efforts made by government played a crucial role in controlling the spread and managing the virus as various stakeholders ensured that public health policies and protocols were adhered to.

2.2.3 Geo-Spatial Distribution of COVID-19 Cases

The Geospatial maps of cumulative number of cases across the country showed that in March 2020, few numbers of cases were reported in 4 regions in the country. From this initial four regions within month one, COVID-19 spread to fourteen out of the 16 administrative regions of the country by month two and by the third month, all sixteen regions had recorded cases with a general increasing cumulative trend. The Greater Accra and Ashanti Regions had the highest rate of increase in the number of cases with the number more than tripling in monthly intervals in Greater Accra Region (Kenu et al. 2020).

The epidemiological characteristics of the first 17, 763 COVID-19 cases in Ghana showed propagated spread of COVID-19 detection in all 16 regions of the nation. More than a third of all cases detected nationwide were asymptomatic. Greater Accra and Ashanti RAegions had the highest number of recorded cases and active cases as of June 30th, 2020. Identified hotspot districts in Accra were the Accra Metropolis, Tema Metropolis and Weija-Gbawe Municipal. In Ashanti Region, identified hotspots were the Obuasi Municipal and Kumasi Metropolitan areas.

2.3 Global Responses to Coronavirus Pandemic

A proactive response is critical to the containment of any disease outbreak, but the coronavirus took the world by surprise and most countries were not prepared initially for the pandemic, including the world powers. Shortly after the outbreak of COVID-19, the World Health Organization (W.H.O) issued guidelines and updates on how to mitigate the spread of the pandemic, and thereafter, many countries adopted different measures in addition to the W.H.O guidelines to contain the spread of the disease (Madeline, 2020). The guideline issued by the W.H.O provided some form of direction for national public health policies.

There were lockdowns in most parts of the world, and people were asked to work from home. Some countries even deployed their military to enforce coronavirus restrictions, and to reduce the number of COVID-19 cases. There were increased demands for health equipment including, protective gowns, sanitizers, face masks and hand gloves. Countries like the United States and the U. K also opened their visitation doors for medical professionals such as doctors and nurses who were working or willing to treat the effects of COVID-19 (Madeline, 2020). In Ghana's case, borders were closed to forestall the spread of the virus.

Also, large gatherings and sporting activities were suspended at both local and international levels. Big sporting events like the prestigious European Champions League games were played

behind closed doors before they were suspended. Global responses to Coronavirus pandemic were varied from country to country, but most countries endorsed the closure of school strategy as a means to contain the spread of COVID-19. In the United States, many schools were closed down, and scheduled tests and examinations were also cancelled. The report shows that some of the schools closed down for Coronavirus in the U.S might not resume back for the rest of the academic year (Madeline, 2020).

New York and the California States were among the worst-hit states in the U.S and the number of cases increased steadily despite strong measures put in place by both the federal and state governments to contain the pandemic. At a point, the country surpassed China in the number of cases of Coronavirus, but the country is determined to defeat the pandemic. School closures in the U.S affected over 60 million students in the country. In Spain, about 11 million students were affected by school closures for mitigation of the spread of Coronavirus. Regional governments in the country closed down schools in response to the increased cases of Coronavirus. The closure of schools in Spain particularly in Madrid led to the suspension of job contracts for people who work at school cafeterias and in special education (El Pais, 2020).

The closure of schools in Spain was very necessary considering that the country lost 849 people in a day due to Coronavirus. In Saudi Arabia, Middle East Monitor (2020), reported that schools and universities across the kingdom were ordered to close down for Coronavirus by the Ministry of Education. The government however, directed that “Virtual schools and distance education be activated to ensure that the educational process continues in an effective and quality manner”. In Australia, Michael (2020) reported that dozens of independent schools were shutdown at New South Wales while some moved to online classes.

Students learn from home, while some schools were opened but implemented strong measures to ensure social distancing strategy. The opening of schools amidst the coronavirus pandemic was backed by the Australian government. The Prime Minister openly announced that schools remained open because the government believes that “children are at very low risk from coronavirus, and the closing of schools could have crippling effects on their health sector and the economy”. The government cited solid health case for keeping schools open, but teachers and parents were worried (ABC News, 2020).

In Italy, schools were shutdown indefinitely, and the military were deployed to help enforce restrictions. However, despite the measures put in place by the government towards curbing the spread of Coronavirus, the country became an epicenter for the outbreak and recorded 969 coronavirus deaths in a single day. In India, all schools and educational institutions were closed down and the government imposed “Janata” Curfew which restricted all citizens to stay at home to contain the spread of Coronavirus. The police also went round some cities to create public awareness about the pandemic.

In France, the government ordered the closure of all schools in a televised broadcast by President Macron. The measure was in response to the increased health crisis in the country due to coronavirus. The country was badly affected just like their counterparts in many parts of the world. The Coronavirus was reported to have originated from Wuhan, China and it was the epicenter at the beginning of the outbreak. Schools and other public institutions were shutdown to mitigate the spread of the virus. The closure of schools and other measures put in place by the government proved effective and the pandemic was contained to a large extent.

The country also closed its borders with some neighboring countries. In Iran, the government closed all schools as part of the preventive measures to halt the spread of coronavirus. Although,

the country was among the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak, and the death tolls in the country were high. The coronavirus increased Iran's economic problems, having been faced with economic sanctions from the West earlier. In Senegal, schools were shutdown to limit the spread of COVID-19. The country was the first sub-Saharan African country to close down schools due to coronavirus. In South Africa, the government directed all schools to close down in response to the coronavirus pandemic. This is in addition to the prohibition of social gatherings of more than 100 people.

In Germany, schools were shut down in response to the spread of coronavirus. The death rate due to coronavirus was reported to be low compared to their neighbor's. The country also earmarked more than 800 billion dollars to fight the pandemic. In Russia, Schools were shut down, and several other measures were taken to halt the pandemic. The death toll for coronavirus in Russia was reported to be low, but measures were put in place to contain the pandemic.

In Nigeria, the federal government ordered a total close down of all schools. The decision was largely applauded, and the National University Commission (NUC), a regulatory body for all universities in Nigeria also gave a follow-up directive to all universities in the country to shut down. The government also suspended social gatherings, and workers were asked to work from home. An Italian who was reported to be the first case of coronavirus in Nigeria was successfully treated and discharged according to the government, but new cases emerged thereafter.

In Ghana, schools were shutdown to contain the spread of coronavirus disease. The government also released 100 million US dollars to enhance the fight against the pandemic. The untimely closure of schools was good supportive measure to contain the spread of the disease, but it also had some adverse consequences on millions of students globally who were faced with multiple

challenges in their education. Thus, the country needs to do more in terms of disaster preparedness and response.

2.4 Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on Basic Education

The outbreak of Coronavirus negatively affected educational activities worldwide. The coronavirus pandemic affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the widespread closures of schools (Wikipedia, 2020b). It created serious disruptions in academic activities, as well as in career plans.

As part of the global efforts to combat COVID-19, many countries across the world closed down schools in an attempt to contain the coronavirus pandemic. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) monitoring, over 100 countries implemented nationwide closures, impacting over half of the world's student population (UNESCO, 2020a). Even Britain, where Prime Minister Boris Johnson - one of those who earlier opposed the move, later admitted that "closing down schools could place further downward pressure on the upward curve of the Coronavirus outbreak" (ABC News, 2020).

Some of the countries that closed down schools due to COVID-19 include, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, China, Kazakhstan, Ethiopia, Honduras, India, Japan, Iran, USA, France, Spain, Italy, North and South Korea, Lebanon, Vietnam, Thailand, Germany, and South Korea just to mention but a few. School closures carry high social, educational and economic costs, and the disruptions they cause touch people across communities, but their impact is particularly severe for disadvantaged persons and their families (UNESCO, 2020b).

Some scholars have suggested that the disruption caused by the spread of the COVID-19 in the educational sector may last longer than expected, if stakeholders do not find solutions to curbing

its spread. UNESCO Director-General, Audrey Azoulayals cited by VOA News (2020), warned that “the global scale and speed of the educational disruption due to coronavirus is unparalleled and, if prolonged, could threaten the right to education”. This was evidenced in the aftermath of closures of schools in Ghana, as stakeholders mainly parents and teachers struggled to adjust to the new normal and had to quickly abandon teaching duties for the risk of public health infections. School closures therefore had severe negative impacts on students’ academic gains and progress as most students preparing for examinations in the BECE and WASSCE papers had their papers cancelled and rescheduled.

There is a likelihood that the idle time of most young people could have led to a rise in social vices such as crime, fraud, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and other social vices that do not augur well for the harmony of society. There was largely unrest among young people who could not adjust to the changes brought by the spread of the pandemic limiting movement thereby ensuring that physical spacing and lockdown measures are adhered to. Most of these young people resorted to online spaces for interactions which when not guided could further lead to a rise in moral delinquency. As most young people were caught at certain points trying to breakdown the rules put down to enforce lockdown measures across the regions in Ghana.

The US Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) also expressed concerns about the implications of school closures. According to the CDC, “longer closures may result in more students congregating outside of schools. Quentin (2014), states that school closing is very controversial, and it can have spillover effects on a large number of students in receiving schools. It can affect the quality of teaching and learning and academic achievement particularly for students with special needs or those with learning difficulties that often require more physical attention and guidance from the teachers.

Though technology can be used to remedy some of the fallouts from school closures, it can however not replace the important effect of face-to-face interactions between students and teachers. Besides, many students do not have the necessary access to supportive technologies which makes it harder to maximize the potentials of learning technology. However, against all odds, empirical analysis of reactive closures of schools in past pandemics indicates that it reduces the total number of cases in the community by 25 percent and postpones the peak of the pandemic by a week or two, while proactive closures of school during pandemics remains one of the most beneficial interventions that can be employed to mitigate the impact of epidemics (Erika et al. 2020).

The impact of school closures led to a massive disruption of the academic calendar of schools as most schools especially public school did not have any other alternative than the day to day face to face interactions during school hours. Therefore, most schools struggled to enroll on the online educational platforms or systems since they had not had prior training on how to use these platforms efficiently for the delivery of teaching and learning materials. And in most cases, there was no other alternative than to close the schools until government gives the go-ahead for schools to resume.

This is as a result of the non-existence of such smart technologies that would aid teaching via the internet platforms such as WhatsApp, zoom and google classrooms. As most public schools lack teaching materials not to talk of smart technologies to aid effective learning at homes. Despite improvising, teachers were largely disconnected from their students as they tried to reach students all over the country through the online educational platforms. Government also made some efforts in mounting educational teaching programs on major television networks across the country which helped to fill in the gaps for various learners.

2.5 Effects of Coronavirus on school closures

The closure of schools has not been a new phenomenon as most countries have had to shut down schooling systems in order to deal with a disaster, security, political, or health issue. It was mainly to curb the situation from getting out of hand which largely was an effective measure. For instance, in Nigeria, the government or school authorities often shutdown schools to address security issues such as cultism, terrorism or violent protests on the campus. Gewertz (2009) cited in Ben, Mathew, and Kristen (2010) reported that “Obama’s administration endorsed closure as part of an array of strategies to turn around 5,000 failing schools in the United States during his regime. This was seen as an effective measure to address the mass failure recorded in schools.

In some of these cases, government efforts are directed at ensuring that its citizenry are safe from any disaster. Even though school closures sometimes may be for good reasons, but the recent school closures for Coronavirus is detrimental to many educational systems across the world. As of 23 March, 2020, over 1.3 billion learners were out of school due to school closures in response to COVID-19 (Wikipedia, 2020b). According to Erika and Nicholas (2020), school closures can either be reactive or proactive. Erika and Nicholas further stated that reactive closing schools occur upon the discovery of coronavirus case among the students, staff or parents. While proactive school closure occurs before the disease even reaches the doors of the school.

Madeline (2020) opined that school closures due to coronavirus has posed new problems like how to make the transition to online and at-home learning, and how to cater for those who rely on school for food and housing security. School closures for coronavirus tends to increase pressures on students, teachers and parents especially those with limited digital skills, education and resources for continued education. It increases the burden on parents to not only struggle to

provide for the home, but also to perform the supervision task of ensuring that their children learn from home.

Unparalleled school closures increase the pressure on hospitals because they have to cater for as many health situations as possible that ordinarily could have been attended to by school health centers. Coronavirus school closures could increase student debt, extend the graduation time of students, and shatter the academic dreams of students, as well as programme schedules of educational institutions. Protracted school closures may result to increase rate of dropouts due to loss of interest and lack of resources to continue. If not well managed, school closures can also increase the rate of crimes, because prolonged school closures can lead to idleness which contributes to negative peer influences and youth involvement in crimes (Madeline, 2020).

The closure of schools led to laying-off of educational workers as most schools could not afford to meet salary demands and budget expenditure. This largely affected demand and supply of labour as some workers had to negotiate for pay cuts or low wages or salaries. It was an overwhelming experience for most educational practitioners as they had to resort to these measures in order to keep the school running. In Ghana's case, most private school employers laid-off workers as a way of cutting down budget expenditure in order to sustain their institutions.

According to UNESCO (2020b), some of the harmful effects of school closures as a result of coronavirus are as follows:

1. Interrupted learning: School provides essential learning and when they are closed, students are deprived of opportunities for growth and development.
2. Nutrition: Many youngsters rely on free or discounted meals provided at schools for food and healthy nutrition. This is compromised as a result of school closures for coronavirus.

3. Unequal Access to digital learning portals: lack of access to technology or good internet connectivity for continued learning during school closures.
4. Increased pressure on schools and school system that remain open; Localized school closures place burdens on schools as parents tend to redirect their children to open schools.
5. Social Isolation: Considering the fact that educational institutions are hubs for social activity and human interactions, school closures can deprive youth and children of some social communications and socializations that are essential to learning, development and creativity. These reveal the nature of effects on learners as they had to endure due to the closure of schools. As a result, most kids psychologically could not adjust to the new normal making life unbearable. Some lost track of their regular routine affecting their social practices due to the pandemic.

Erika and Nicholas (2020) suggested that closing schools are not the only option to mitigate coronavirus. They advocated for authorities to give parents some flexibility to choose what is best for their families, while implementing stronger mitigation measures. However, in contrast to Erika and Nicholas's position, the president of the New South Wales Teachers Federation opposed the opening of schools during the outbreak of coronavirus. He believed that "the design of their schools and the size of the classrooms makes it impossible" to implement social distancing in schools (Michael, 2020).

In Ghana's case, most stakeholders discussed how the protocols could be applied within the school setting as they found it impossible to enforce these new rules. To mitigate the effects on learners due to the closure of schools, educators and learners had to adapt to the use of technological tools and platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp, and Google classrooms in order to make up for the lost time and ensure that the academic calendar progresses and not been halted.

2.6 Long Term Impacts

Some scholars have predicted long term impacts on learners as a result of global closure of schools. Despite the resumption of schools, the impact is being felt by learners as they have to be rushed through the curriculum in order to meet the targets for the academic year. Therefore, closed schools not only impart less new knowledge (Oreopoulos and Salvanes, 2011), but also mean loss of already acquired skills on which further learning could build (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). It is expected that learners would have lost already acquired skills before the closure of schools. Recent research and the commensurate policy development have pointed to an important role of early childhood education. This critical development window appears particularly important for preparing disadvantaged students for schooling (e.g., (Heckman, 2006). It is essential that policy making takes into cognizance the needs of learners at the primary stage of education.

As a result, policy makers must ensure intervention plans are put in place to mitigate the impact on learner's academic growth. The disruption of this segment of the education system will likely have lasting long-term impacts on affected child cohorts, but it is not currently possible to incorporate this into the estimates (Hanushek, 2014). In 1990, for example, teachers in the Walloon part of Belgium went on strike for several months, closing almost all the schools repeatedly for up to six weeks at a time over several months.

Belot and Webbink (2010) compared the development of the affected pupils with those in the Flemish part of Belgium, which was not affected by the strike-related school closures. Results suggest that the school closures have led to an increase in grade repetition and, in the long run, to lower educational attainment, including lower completion of degrees at higher education levels. For the Canadian province of Ontario, Baker (2013) shows that teacher strikes have led to significantly lower skill gains of the affected students.

Jaume and Willén (2019) looks at particularly long-term effects of strike-related school closures for Argentina: they find that pupils who were affected by teacher strikes in primary school later suffer salary losses of 2-3% on the labour market. They are also more often exposed to unemployment and work in occupations with lower skill requirements. Closed schools can therefore indeed have very long-term negative consequences for the children and adolescents concerned.

On average, over the summer months, students suffer skill losses in the order of about 10% of a standard deviation. Closed schools therefore mean not only stagnation, but a sharp decline (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). This loss of skills is pronounced in mathematics; though in reading students from disadvantaged backgrounds also suffer a pronounced loss of skills. In contrast, the reading skills of pupils from socio-economically better-off backgrounds actually increased slightly.

According Kuhfeld et al. (2020) school closures are likely to have led to significant learning losses in math and reading. However, they estimate heterogeneous effects, and conclude that high-performing students are likely to make gains. Likewise, Chetty et al., 2020 find that, post-COVID student progress on an online math program decreased significantly more in poorer ZIP codes. Covid-19 had multiple effects on the schools and jobs of families as some parents lost their jobs which impacted negatively on the educational growth of students.

In Australia, Michael (2020) reported that dozens of independent schools were shutdown at New South Wales while some moved to online classes. Students learned from home, while some schools were opened but implemented strong measures to ensure social distancing strategy. In Ghana's case, schools were closed within the first few weeks when COVID-19 outbreak was

recorded leading to nation-wide disruption of the academic calendar for fear of spread of the virus.

The outbreak of Coronavirus negatively affected educational activities worldwide. The coronavirus pandemic affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the widespread closures of schools (Wikipedia, 2020b). It created serious disruptions in academic activities, as well as in career plans.

There is a likelihood that students' academic interest would wane down affecting performance negatively. This can also lead to the involvement of young people in social vices such as crime, drugs, sexual immorality due to idleness. School closures would therefore impact more on vulnerable families that cannot afford these supportive technologies and spaces for learning for their kids. These harmful effects are still being felt despite the resumption of schooling in Ghana as the Ministry of Education through and its various District Education Directorates are putting in measures to ensure that students lost time is recovered through various learning programs initiated at various public schools in the country.

The spread of the coronavirus also affected vulnerable students in the rural areas who rely on the Ghana School Feeding Program for their meals. This vulnerable group was denied their basic right to their nutritional needs as most depended on this meal funded by the Ghana School Feeding Program. As Ghana is not yet out of the woods, intervention plans must be put in place to make up for the loss of time for teaching and learning in order to mitigate the long term impact of Covid on primary school learners.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to explain the research methodology and procedures for data collection. Every empirical research utilizes a certain methodology for the purposes of data collection (Babbie, 2009). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), research methodology entails the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used. Therefore, the chapter provides a description of the method employed in the study, research design, population, sampling and sampling technique, data collection as well as the mode of data analysis and summary of the chapter.

3.1 Research Design

Research design according to Vogt (2005, p. 87), is the plan that a researcher will follow when conducting the study. According to Kumar (2011), a research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems. A good research design has a clearly defined purpose, and has consistency between the research questions and the proposed research method (O. Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

A qualitative research paradigm was employed in this research to gather and analyze data using a focused group discussion technique. Qualitative research attempts to understand a phenomenon from the viewpoint of the population involved. Lindlof (1995:5) makes the point that qualitative research allows a researcher to interview people as a means of understanding their views “on a scene, to retrieve experiences from the past, to gain expert insight or information, to obtain descriptions of events or scenes that are normally unavailable for observation.

This approach helps to foster trust, to understand a sensitive or intimate relationship, or to analyze certain kinds of discourse.” The researcher therefore employed a qualitative research design due to its exploratory and open-ended nature of the research questions. Qualitative research paradigm is an in-depth research using a range of techniques with the aim to understand reason, opinion and motivations. This enabled the researchers elicit responses in relation to the impact of covid-19 on primary basic education in the Greater Accra Region.

Samples tend to be small since it does not focus mainly on “how many”. The benefit of qualitative approaches is that it is an open-ended approach that adapts and evolves as the study progresses which enhances the quality of the data and insights generated. It also allows the researcher to understand the issues from different perspectives. Some common qualitative methods include interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation (Watkins, 2012). Methodology pertains to the decisions we make about the areas we are researching, data gathering techniques and data interpretation forms when preparing and executing a research study (Silverman, 2005).

It shows how a research is carried out and provides a foundation for the research. The design also places great importance on what is to be studied in order to generate comprehension rather than vague results (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). The qualitative research method has been criticized as being subjective. However, it best suits this study because it offers ample information and fundamentals for better understanding of the research problem of this study (Zikmund & Carr, 2000).

This approach gives the researcher the opportunity to obtain in-depth data from participants through their personal narratives and statements about the knowledge they have about child rights (Gray, 2009). As suggested by Duncan et al (2009), it is safe to adopt a qualitative research approach when the researcher is not sure of the nature of responses that would be given and also when the researcher wants to adopt an open realm of response.

The researcher employed the qualitative approach in the data analysis, interpretation and presentation of findings. The qualitative research paradigm was used in presenting and analyzing the data. This approach enabled the researcher to describe and make inferences based on the social practice theory which is used to assess the impact of Covid-19 on primary education since it led to the disruption of the academic calendar thereby leading to the loss of skills and shared collective practices.

3.2 Research Methods

The researchers made use of both primary and secondary data, which were gathered from diverse sources, including, archival sources, text books, journals/articles (both publish and unpublished), and internet sites. The primary research is tailored to suit the needs of the research. This research involves the collection of raw data, which forms the main basis for achieving the research objectives. The sources of which includes, unpublished documents, research institutes and other agencies. An attempt was made at collecting and analyzing primary data which has gone a long way to validate the findings and conclusions drawn from the research.

Secondary sources provide relevant analysis of data found in primary sources including books, journals, dissertations, reports, speeches and so on (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 186; du Plooy, 2009: 62). These sources would be used in the data collection process. The qualitative research approach was deemed to be appropriate by the researchers hence its adoption. Saunders et al. (2007) opined that the method for collecting research data is linked to research approaches adopted. Babbie (1990, p. 133) describes validity as “the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration”. Consequently, the good sampling technique used in this research makes it very credible Kvale, (1995).

3.3 Research Site

The research is situated in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Selected schools participating in the research study are located within the capital city of Accra. There are many schools providing education both private and public institutions. The Ghana Education Service (GES) is solely responsible in running government schools and providing curriculum guidance for schools using the Ghanaian Curriculum for instruction. The main language of instruction used to teach in the various public schools is the English Language.

This research study focused on primary schools within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Some of the selected primary schools will comprise of both public and private primary schools within the Greater Accra Region. This is to ensure that schools captured are within the same region so as to ensure some form of uniformity in data collection and analysis. This would adequately reflect the region and provide some form of generalization of findings per regional population. Therefore, selected primary schools include the German Swiss International School (GSIS), Nima, Multikids Inclusive Academy, East Legon, North Little Legon Campus, North Legon, Accra Royal Primary & JHS, Korle-Gonno, St. Mary's Primary & JHS, Korle-Gonno, World Gospel International School, Korle-bu, St. Charles Primary & JHS, Mamprobi, and Akwei Memorial Government School, Agbogbloshie, Accra.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Sampling, especially in qualitative research, allows researchers to have a deeper understanding of a problem under study (Black, 2012: 168-169; Stacks, 2011: 197). Participants were selected based on their deep knowledge and experience of the issue under investigation (Merriam, 2009: 77). Purposive sampling allows cases or units to be specifically selected due to their ability to give

detailed information about the issues that are important to the research. The study used an interview guide to elicit responses from school's heads and teachers of the various schools.

For the purposes of this study, a sample size of 8 primary basic schools within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana were selected. These primary basic schools would consist of both public and private primary basic schools offering basic education to students. These institutions would be selected using a purposive sampling technique which enables the researcher to select based on the knowledge level and experience of participants or respondents. This technique enables the researcher to gather data from selected primary educational institutions within the Greater Accra whose schools were closed due to government's decision to halt the spread of the coronavirus.

3.5 Research Instrument

The research instrument used here was an interview guide and focused group discussion technique. The qualitative research interview seeks to describe and give meanings to the central themes in the life of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (Kvale, 1996). A focused group technique was employed within the data collection process which enabled the researcher to collect an appropriate amount of data in a short period of time. This technique enabled the researcher to obtain rich data that are not usually achieved when applying an instrument individually. The application of this technique permits some form of spontaneity of interaction among the participants. Its application has a high face validity in terms of data collected. It's fairly easy to conduct or drive since the same interview guide is administered to all members of the group. And lastly, the FGD technique is quite cheaper than other methods.

The researcher ensured that prompts were administered intermittently when the need arises since the interviewee might sometimes not stay within the scope of discussion. This is very helpful in permitting the interviewee to expand on a particular issue or in getting them to re-engage with the interview process if they lose their train of thought (Robson, 2002). Tod (2006) suggests that the flexibility of the interview structure is one of its greatest strengths. The use of the interview guide served its purpose of flexibility as it enabled the interviewer to elicit responses in a manner that sought to engage the interviewee.

3.6 Data Collection

Data collection techniques allow the researcher to learn about a phenomenon by gathering information from individuals, groups, and text in any medium (Biber et al 2011: 5). Approaches to data collection in qualitative research usually consist of interacting directly with participants either on a face-to-face level or in a group setting. Qualitative methods of data collection allow the researcher to gather rich information and also gain a deeper insight into the topic under investigation.

Data collection was undertaken using a recorder that helped to collect the responses of the participants. The participants were asked questions using the interview guide as a way of ensuring that both interviewer and interviewee remained within the scope the study. The data collected centered mainly on the impact of Covid-19 on primary educations within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Prior to meeting up with the participants, initial contacts were made between the researcher and school heads. This was to ensure that the participants are adequately informed of the research study.

3.6.1 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data followed these steps: meticulous transcription of recordings (voice- to-text), developing and applying codes to all material, identifying themes, patterns, and relationships concerning the created codes, summarizing the data (Saldana 2009). Data collected was assorted and assigned codes to ensure that each participants responses was captured. The information was analyzed through thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). Data analysis was therefore undertaken devoid of bias in this study by reporting exactly what respondents said on the study field via a recorder and transcription done using thematic analysis. This was to ensure that data transcription was done verbatim in relation to the data collection process.

3.7 Significance of the Study

The study seeks to contribute to existing knowledge on the impact of school closures on primary education within the Greater Accra Region due to the spread of the coronavirus. It would help stimulate discussions on policy making in relation to future outbreak of pandemics impacting negatively on learning, teaching and the health of learners. The findings would therefore inform policy making in relation to mitigation efforts and policy action documents that seeks to incorporate lessons learnt in the educational management and leadership in the various primary sections of schooling

3.8 Ethical Consideration

Ethics refers to the moral principles that govern the actions of a researcher, that is, it deals with what is right and wrong (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 65; Babbie, 2008: 66). As such, participants consent would be sought for and confidentiality of their sources assured for academic purposes.

3.9 Summary

This chapter analyzed the methods adopted in gathering data necessary to achieve the research objective. The research methodology applied in this study was the qualitative research approach which enable the research to gain insights on the experiences from the various participants ranging from heads of schools, primary teachers and administrative staff. It explored how primary and secondary data was adopted in collecting data via a recorder with participants. It also touched on the data analysis process that involved assorting the data, coding process of the various participants and their responses based on the themes so as to generate meaningful data for interpretation. The next chapter focuses on the analysis and discussion of data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of findings along the study research questions and objectives, on the impact of Covid-19 on basic education in the Ghana. This chapter is developed from primary and secondary data used for this study. The findings of the research study are presented in this chapter according to the themes that emerged from data collected through a focused group discussion. Instead of participants real names, codes were used to refer to the participants or respondents in relation to the interview responses. The interviewing process was undertaken using the interview guide and focus group discussion as an instrument. Each focus group discussion (FGD) comprised 4 individuals, for a total of 32 respondents or participants for the study.

4.1 School's reaction to the closure of school's nationwide by the Government of Ghana

The first objective of this study was to find out the reaction of the various school to the governments directive of closure of schools. This theme critically analyses how school's reacted and what steps were taken to communicate to parents who are major stakeholders of the educational system. It also sought to explore mediums used by the schools to reach out to students and parents during this period of school closure. Other sub-themes sought to find out how students and parents also reacted to the closure of schools including various stakeholders in the educational sector. The findings from the study reveals that the various schools were largely unprepared when it came to the government's decision to close down school. Due to the public health safety, these schools largely complied with government's directives of closure of schools.

Below are some of the responses from respondents in representative quotes during the focused group discussion in relation to their reactions concerning the closure of schools:

“parents were not happy that their kids or wards could not access learning materials, but they had no choice though it was not their initial plan...some kind of monies were given to support but it was not effective in delivering quality teaching and learning. So most of the students came on the platform but later went off and some too noticed that the internet was not very effective and so when assignments are given you realize that due to the lack of a face-to-face interaction with the challenge, it becomes difficult to help facilitate learning....so how do you". (FGD8, R3, Male, Akwei Mem. Govt. Sch)

“we heard during the announcement by government and it was at first a major blow for both parents and teachers and all stakeholders within the educational sector, but we were able to overcome it by putting in place support systems that would keep teaching and learning going”. (FGD2, R1, Female, Multikids Inclusive Academy)

“for my school we didn’t have much problems regarding the closure of schools...just that we simply guided all teachers and so we kind of sampled major platforms that we could use in delivering teaching and learning to our students...and we settled on google classroom, then zoom and so the whole school quickly went online...so there was training for teachers to bring them up to speed with IT teaching and learning tools”. (FGD3, R1, Male, North Little Legon School)

“usually when we heard the news, we were not all that happy because we the private schools, we knew that it was going to affect us massively, and so we heard the news, we were not all that happy but also we also need to adhere to those directives by the government. And so we also started to close down our school for the safety of the children in the school. (FGD6, R1, Male, World Gospel Int. Sch)

“we just had to obey once it’s coming from above and so we had to obey”. (FGD4, R1, Female, Accra Royal School)

“during that period, we really could not reach but if anything we did come around to the school and then those around if there is any information we gave it to them to inform their colleagues at home”. (FGD4, R3, Female, Accra Royal School)

“it wasn’t a surprise to us because of the situation...the covid issue we just accepted it because we were all fighting for our safety and so we accepted it”. (FGD5, R1, Male, St. Mary’s School)

“it wasn’t a shock but I would say it was confusing initially, in a sense that we didn’t know what was really going on and how closure meant you can improvise...so you can think about your lessons...so in a week after, we heard the Ministry of Education, say there was going to be a Ghana Television which would be showed on the MultiTV platform so that candidates could have their lessons online...so when that option came...we were clear as to what it meant to do but it was different from the traditional way of learning but came a substitute to classroom learning”. (FGD3, R3, Female, North Little Legon School)

With regard to mediums of reaching out to parents to inform them of government’s directives, some respondents indicated that:

“we were sending more of emails to parents and we did it in relation with all the covid protocols and we were able to put that online”. (FGD2, R4, Male, Multikids Inclusive Academy)

“we organized PTA meeting in the school in relation to the closure and referred the parents that school would be going online to handle the children. So during that time, we communicated to them by calling them personally on their phone lines and we also developed a whatsapp platform and per the platform that we were having, we were able to get to parents and we spoke to them”. (FGD7, R4, Male, St. Charles School)

“as usual, this thing it was nationwide and so all parents almost all knew about the decision of the government to close down schools both private and public schools. The parents knew from the television as a result of news broadcast”. (FGD6, R3, Male, World Gospel Int. School)

“I think they heard it from the media and there was no need for communication once its coming from above...and it was on the radio station and television station for those who could read...so they knew what was going on and it wasn’t a school affair but a national affair..so everybody was much aware and so there was no need for informing the parents”. (FGD4, R2, Male, Accra Royal School).

“It was difficult because most of them are not on whatsapp, so it was a bit of challenge to us initially but along the line we were able to get the parents to make plans and we created plans for them.... then we started communicating it to them”. (FGD5, R3, Female, St. Mary’s School)

“it was difficult to reach some parents in the same time and also because parents were looking at the safety of rather their children, they were not looking at the academic effect on the child...so most of the children in private schools were somehow okay because their parents could afford to support them but those in the public schools could not afford a home teacher or tutor for their

wards. This affected them, even as at now, after so many months, the effects are still there”. (FGD8, R3, Male, Akwei Mem. Govt. Sch)

The findings above reveals that most public schools were largely not pragmatic in reaching out to parents since most of them had heard the Ministry of Education directive on the closure of schools and therefore did not take steps to reach out to the parents during this period since the directive was made public. However, private schools within the Greater Accra region were more pragmatic as several mediums such emails were sent to parents and guardians informing them of government’s directive to close all schools. It must also be noted that most public schools are run by the government that is the Ministry of Education and as such all directives issued must complied with making it difficult for heads of the various public schools to exercise their discretion in decision making in this case since any action taken outside that directive might lead to them be queried.

4.2 Impact of the closure of school’s due to the spread of the coronavirus on students learning and teaching

The second objective of this study sought to examine the nature of impact of the closure of school’s on student’s learning and teaching. The sub-themes focused on the nature of impact on the academic calendar, student’s learning progress, delivery of teaching and learning materials, effect on teachers in relation to lesson plans and class preparations, impact on academic records in terms of marks obtained during tests and exams, recorded cases of academic decline, group of students affected the most by this impact and finally the nature of effect on the psychological and emotional well-being of the students.

The findings largely reveal that there was a massive impact on academic calendar, student’s learning progress, teaching and learning, educational targets, lessons plans and class preparation which resulted in poor grades recorded, academic decline, loss of knowledge and skills acquired.

The nature of impact for public schools was very severe as tests scores decreased due to the lack of an improvised system of learning that could help students regain skills lost and also due to the nature of centralized authority within the Ghanaian educational system which restricted efforts of many heads in using their discretion to create some innovation that would have kept students on their various educational targets. Some respondents expressed their views in relation to the negative impact as a result of the closure of schools by indicating that:

“there is so many impacts, as in the time spent at home, the safety protocol that was put out...the child finds it difficult to adapt to it...because it has not been part of life...so It was bad decision and a sad decision because they took as it was said but in the longrun it affected the children’s performance because children were”. (FGD8, R1, Female, Akwei Mem. Govt. School)

“it impacted negatively on the students learning...first of all, some students are not having all the books for studies and if it was at school, the teacher would have been the one to take them through but due to the closure of school, that was not possible...the child if it was at school during class hours would have understood what was taught better.... but the child finds it difficult to ask”. (FGD8, R1, Male, Akwei Mem. Govt. Sch)

“It affected the schools, because the children went home for almost one year especially the form 3 that were about to write the BECE exams. As such we were giving them, exercises on phone and it was not effective because some parents were not at home to monitor...some times as the head teacher I go round to monitor but you would see that the parent themselves who gave us their phone numbers are sometimes offline...as the child is supposed to learn...so it affected them big time....and when they said, we should go by the JHS and so the form 3 that were about to write the exams, things that we have taught them had all been lost in relation to skills and knowledge had all been forgotten and lost...and so we had to restart everything again”. (FGD7, R3, Male, St. Charles School)

“academic results were determined by how much effort was put in the online learning at home and the support the parents gave. It was obvious those children who had support and were focused on learning as opposed to those who did not, regardless of their prior academic ability”. (FGD1, R3, Male, German Swiss Int. Sch)

“very obvious decline in handwriting skills. As students were typing most of the time, they forgot how to write. There was a general decline in English writing

skills eg. creative writing and also grammar. Also a decline in second language skills”. (FGD1, R4, Male, German Swiss Int. Sch)

“moreover, parent’s guidance at home was not effective at all, as most times, the student was left on his or her own without no adequate support systems in place to ensure that the child is learning...so the blame are always put on teachers...”. (FGD8, R4, Female, Akwei Mem. Govt. Sch).

In relation to grades some respondents stated that:

“Oh, the grades fell.... the grades fell definitely, the grade was not good at all, even as at now, we are still feeling the impact of the closure of school which is still reflecting in their grades...yes”. (FGD8, R3, Male, Akwei Mem. Govt. Sch)

“we organized mock exams for our students and midterm exams and we saw that children that we knew were very excellent academically suddenly had dropped very low in their respective grades or scores...especially the good one suffered academic decline drastically... a case in point, is one of my best students, who performed poorly, as I was thinking he would perform excellently in the BECE his grade formally 12, had come...”. (FGD7, R1, Male, St. Charles School)

“academic results were determined by how much effort was put in the online learning at home and the support the parents gave. It was obvious those children who had support and were focused on learning as opposed to those who did not, regardless of their prior academic ability”. (FGD1, R3, Male, German Swiss Int. Sch)

In relation to impact on students learning, some heads of schools admitted that there was some form negative impact in the form of challenges...

“it impacted negatively on the students learning...first of all, some students are not having all the books for studies and if it was at school, the teacher would have been the one to take them through but due to the closure of school, that was not possible...the child if it was at school during class hours would have understood what was taught better.... but the child finds it difficult to ask”. (FGD8, R1, Male, Akwei Mem. Govt. Sch)

“moreover, parent’s guidance at home was not effective at all, as most times, the student was left on his or her own without no adequate support systems in place to ensure that the child is learning...so the blame are always put on teachers...”. (FGD8, R4, Female, Akwei Mem. Govt. Sch)

“most of the students depended on their parents and so if the parent was not around they could not have access to the phones...unlike other private schools

where the parents could afford these phones....” (FGD5, R4, Male, St. Mary’s School)

“negatively yes, there were a lot of negatives I must say...in a sense that, most of us here don’t have parents who live with their kids...and so when covid happened and the lock down came, a few parents who even had the opportunity to stay at home, we still not up to work so supervision was quite a challenge on the parts of parents supporting their wards and some of the teachers...but the very little ones who must be if you want pampered or persuaded into learning...so we had our own challenges when the school migrated to online systems of learning or when the school went online...one of the challenges was lack of control in terms that the parents who were at home, were also working so the offices at the various places simply transferred to the various homes, and so there was divided attention and what to do was a challenge and the very big ones too needed time and persuasion”. (FGD3, R4, Male, North Little Legon School)

“at times little ones that were sometimes hyper-active, if the teachers found them online, were very difficult to controlling them, because there were occasions where a recorded session was taking place and a particular child was climbing on the window and this led to the teacher screaming and asking the child to sit down...it so I mean...at a point, I think he kept pulling out of the online system...and so that was another challenge...and there was also the internet interruption”. (FGD3, R2, Female, North Little Legon School)

“there are times when a teacher would be having teaching lessons and the lines would just drop...some parents would have a challenge and the child would drop out...and what have you...parents who had more than one child also had a challenge of also buying two or more or three appliances to satisfy all children...and there were also some parents who were not IT savvy and as such could not help their children at home...and learning dropped....”. (FGD3, R3, Female, North Little Legon School)

“the body language was also another problem...it revealed that students were mostly absent...and some of them also veered off to other sites especially when parents were not around at home...and some were using these opportunities to search for dangerous sites...at the end of th day, it impacted negatively on their studies especially their results because we had serious students dropping to just average and those who were IT improved but those who were not dropped drastically”. (FGD3, R4, Male, North Little Legon School)

“It really affected our students in terms of their grades and scores...majority of our students had low grades and scores in test or exams...so it really, really affected our school and came as a blow and as at now it is really affecting us...our students in the JHS preparing for the BECE had low grades and the

performance was very low. We didn't record any teenage pregnancies. (FGD6, R2, Male, World Gospel Int. Sch)

"It was drastic...the impact was very bad...and so our girls came back pregnant...most of our girls came back pregnant and then some even here didn't report back to school at all because of the long break and those who came back too academically they became low because they were not reading since it was a public school. And so parents who ply their trade, we would wake up at dawn and go to trade...so these are parents that go out and come back when the children have gone to sleep...and so no one watches over them and so they would not learn and they became low performers and so came down academically and you had to talk over and over again...it was really a problem as the impact was very bad". (FGD4, R1, Female, Accra Royal Sch)

"It really affected their learning as most of them were not able to get access to the whatsapp platform but even we had the whatsapp page, we only had a few, you can say only 30% of the student population....so most students were affected...it was bad...very bad and the unfortunate thing is that we were asked not to write exams and so we didn't write exams but the class assessments we did was bad...because of the closure of schools for almost a year....so it was so bad....so we had to go all back to revise and all that...". (FGD5, R1, Male, St. Mary's School)

"you see the assignments that we did, few of them would get in terms of understanding the nature of the work...sometimes the parents reach out to you to find out how to go about the work...because now it is the parent and the child that are at home...so they did call me several times to find out how should they go about the assignment tasks given...so some parents did call just to clarify some instructions given to their wards concerning assignments etc". (FGD8, R2, Male, Akwei Mem. Govt. Sch)

However, some private schools, expressed much optimism amidst the negative impact of the closure of schools due to the spread of the pandemic. Most of the private schools were more pragmatic in putting in measures to cushion the impact of covid on students learning during that period. The findings reveal a more prepared form of school leadership since they were autonomous in relation to their administrative way of handling things and so effective measures were taken to mitigate any immediate impact on student's learning. Some of the pragmatic efforts taken resulted in the school's migrating unto the online platforms whiles ensuring that the covid

protocols were strictly adhered to on campus while students stayed home when lessons were conducted. Some of the respondents expressed the following in representative quotes:

“I think we did not have any impact negatively on students’ performance because we were very much prepared and had the capacity to deliver online studies for teaching and learning...so there was no serious impact on the academic and educational goals of our students...where there was an impact was on the social and emotional side....socially the students were not able to see their parents and friends since they could not come to school...so they were giving their parents a hard time...so all that emotionally not able to see their friends and when the online began and they started to see their friends online, they became much more calm...the social was really important for their development as children but the lack of that affected them”. (FGD2, R2, Male, Multikids Inclusive Academy)

“Surprisingly enough, there was great academic achievement and the students did very, very, well in their grades or scores...because of the covid and the social distancing, we believed that, not everybody can maintain their grades and so we put in measures to support them and there was one on one teaching recommended for some kids at home and so some of our staff did go to homes to teach abiding by the protocols and some mostly used the online systems. So parents had to make the students ready for classes both home and online classes. (FGD2, R3, Male, Multikids Inclusive Academy)

“yes, there were few students who were affected in relation to their academics, because some of their parents were at work and could not supervise them at home...so it definitely affected them...but we did put up an intervention plan that enabled some teachers to provide support in teaching and learning at the homes of these students...we had three different teachers, we had online, hybrid and home schooling teachers”. (FGD2, R1, Female, Multikids Inclusive Academy)

“for my school we didn’t have much problems regarding the closure of schools...just that we simply guided all teachers and so we kind of sampled major platforms that we could use in delivering teaching and learning to our students...and we settled on google classroom, then zoom and so the whole school quickly went online...so there was training for teachers to bring them up to speed with IT teaching and learning tools”. (FGD3, R1, Male, North Little Legon School)

In relation to category of students most affected by the closure of schools, some heads of schools revealed that:

“the very poor ones and then those who were living with their grandparents who were born before computers...our international system, most of our parents are not home, as some of them are working outside Ghana, so most of our children have parents abroad and siblings and uncles busy elsewhere...and they are with nannies and house helps...and some of these house helps are not also conversant with technology...and some of them too are living with their parents and because of the area they live in, they find it difficult for connecting unto the school’s online system of learning or platform...a section of the students also suffered some connectivity issues.” (FGD3, R3, Female, North Little Legon School)

“students that didn’t have their own personal laptop or ipad devices. Students whose parents were not able to support them with their work for whatever reason either parents busy or illiterate so could not help. Students who generally did not have a structure put in place for learning at home eg. students who were left to do whatever they wanted during the day rather than having a learning time table at home set by parents.” (FGD1, R2, Female, German Swiss Int. Sch)

“the female students since most of them returned back pregnant and some were preparing for their exams and so how do you teach them...it was during the third term and so some had to write the exams and leave and so they really were affected since they knew that it was their time to exit...meanwhile they were still kept in schools...so they were like where are we going and what is our fate...and so for the female child...they were really affected and the parental care was very bad...some of them even had to fend for themselves...so most of them did not do anything as people would send them and give them money before they are able to cater for them and some female students became pregnant in the process but we received them back and some are in the classroom now and a few were feeling shy due to stigmatization and so one or two didn’t come back but some also came and some few weeks went back...but some are in the classroom...so some mothers are in the classroom...”. (FGD4, R2, Male, Accra Royal Sch)

The sub-theme on the impact of the academic calendar revealed that the academic calendar of all schools were generally affected but the findings further reveals that private schools were more pragmatic in improvising a system that would work for them since the closure of schools disrupted the academic calendar. The nature of disruption of the academic calendar led to most public schools not able to continue and so had start all over again whiles most private schools had a more effective plan which incorporated an intervention plan in order to recover any loss of

knowledge, skill and lesson plans. Some of the respondents indicated the following in representative quotes:

“the academic calendar, i think we wasted one week, going back and forth with the training....due to the organization of equipment’s, comparing the info graphics was a challenge, and added to the cost of data...the school bore the cost of data...some teachers did not have laptops and so there was also the issues of teachers rushing in for soft loans to buy laptops that were not forthcoming...and then parents too because it was online refused to pay school fees so the school kind of run at lost, salaries were halved and motivation dipped drastically, despite that, we expected to give 100 percent of teaching and learning...basically these were the concerns. (FGD3, R2, Male, North Little Legon School)

“yeah, as your know the academic calendar was supposed to start by August, but due to covid, we had to start in March again and so it affected us a lot...because as we speak now, the new calendar starts in January, and the last time, I was at a school meeting and it was communicated to us that private schools, have to do their own and we are not government schools, semester is not used anymore and so we would be going back to the terms we were formally going that is for we the private schools...from this year, we would not do that but start our term 1, term 2 and termly system concurrently...” (FGD7, R2, Male, St. Charles School)

“the academic calendar, I think we wasted one week, going back and forth with the training....due to the organization of equipments, comparing the info graphics was a challenge, and so we had a zoom, google classroom, as a whole lot of apps came up...on each occasion, we had also had to buy bundles for our teachers...that added to the cost of data...the school bore the cost of data...some teachers did not have laptops and so there was also the issues of teachers rushing in for soft loans to buy laptops that were not forthcoming...and then parents too because it was online refused to pay school fees so the school kind of run at lost, salaries were halved and motivation dipped drastically, despite that, we expected to give 100 percent of teaching and learning...basically these were the concerns...” (FGD3, R2, Female, North Little Legon Sch)

“it really affected us a lot in terms of the academic calendar as we had to close down the school since our President said we are not in normal times...and so it affected us but we were able to reach parents to send them assignment and tasks for their children.” (FGD6, R2, Male, World Gospel Int. Sch)

“It really did affect the academic calendar and affected those who were supposed to write their exams at that time since the school system was closed for almost a year...so we had to go back to complete already delivered lessons since

they had lost considerable amount of knowledge thereby impacting on their studies...so now we had a lot of work to do and it was a problem since we had about 8 weeks to finish the curriculum at that time...and so we had to compress things, to do what we had to do get things done..." (FGD4, R4, Male, Accra Royal School)

"It was totally distorted, the academic calendar was totally distorted...as we did not know when to start since we receive the directives from the ministry of education and district offices...especially the government schools as we were waiting on the government so we could not get things done since we had to wait on government's directives". (FGD5, R2, Male, St. Mary's School)

"for the most part of the schools tried to stick to their term dates. Although now school has opened extra days have been added to the school calendar I guess to help make up for lost time so we either close later for Christmas or reopen earlier in January". (FGD1, R2, Female, German Swiss Int. Sch)

Another sub-theme focused on the impact on teachers' lesson plans and class preparations revealed that lesson plans and class preparations were generally affected by virtue of the closure of schools. Despite some moderate efforts made to have a virtual class, it was not as effective as the face-to-face interaction that would have taken place. In relation to mediums used, some of the participants indicated that:

"since we did not have the means to communicate to parents and so our main mediums were via whatsapp since most parents could not even afford these phones..." (FGD5, R3, Female, St. Mary's Sch)

"we used the internet, but it was not effective at all, as I told you before, some children are not having all the books, as you remember I told you....(FGD8, R4, Female, Akwei Mem. Govt. Sch)

"yes pls...we mainly used the internet but it was not successful as we got interrupted, disconnected on several occasions, and students also had issues with connectivity and some also relied on their parents phone and so when they were not at home, lessons could not go on...because they did not have access to phones for classes online...we used most at time whatsapp for our classes and it was mostly audio". (FGD8, R1, Male, Akwei Mem. Govt. Sch)

"the zoom application was very effective though we did record a number of internet challenges along the way...and sometimes data usage...but we ensured that every teacher had enough data and so we gave them money to buy data for

mainly teaching and learning of their students.” (FGD2, R4, Male, Multikids Inclusive Academy)

“we used the whatsapp and by calling them personally...sometimes we ask the parents to come to the school for exercises for their wards....and some parents generally came around to pick them but not all...but those that we were able to reach them, they did come around to pick all the assignment readings and task for their children...”. (FGD7, R1, Male, St. Charles School)

“we only used sometimes whatsapp and calls but the calls were very effective as we called the parents to give specific instructions on how to pick up some materials for their wards to study at home.... because we are not in normal times and so they should adhere to the covid protocols. We also sent hard copies of assignments and we would go for it and come and mark”. (FGD6, R1, Male, World Gospel Int. Prep. Sch)

“no, we didn’t use the virtual and so it after that they said the Form 3’s should come and so we met them and once you tell one, they spread the message to others since it’s a community and they are together and so they come around and some live around and so you talk to one and they spread the message....but the media is also there and the form 3s are going to school and so they heard it...so those parents who listen to radio and tv also heard it...”. (FGD4, R2, Male, Accra Royal School)

“Internet- zoom, google classroom, gmail and whatsapp”. (FGD1, R4, Male, German Swiss Int. Sch)

“so generally students were able to employ the technology to their advantage...because they were already good at it...most of our work was done online...and the assignments were given early...exercises were given via google classroom and then they would work on and send it to the emails...so because they were already good at the IT, doing research to the guidance of whoever was at home and they presented it very beautifully”. (FGD3, R2, Male, North Little Legon School)

Despite the various intervention put in place to ensure that the online platforms were effective for delivery of teaching and learning, most teachers agreed that the virtual platforms were not as effective as compared to the face-to-face interactions during classroom sessions. One of the respondents during the focus group discussions indicated that:

“nothing compared to face to face learning. also unreliable internet connectivity. Loss of control of class and concentration levels”. (FGD1, R2, Female, German Swiss Int. Sch)

In relation to their emotional and psychological well-being, some respondents indicated that:

“It impacted on their mental health as lockdown meant no socializing and seeing their parents worry or some family members ill. When a child’s mental health is impacted, they cannot learn. Also, online learning was very difficult as a lot of young children were not used to using the technology and having to concentrate on a lesson on a screen for a longtime”. (FGD1, R4, Male, German Swiss Int. Sch)

“when you say, psychological, you know when the child is told something and you notice that he or she is not improving, the child would be affected negatively...I know many were striving before but when the coronavirus came, it seems we are starting all over again...”. (FGD8, R3, Akwei Mem. Govt. Sch)

“emotionally, some of them were like is there any hope for us...because by now we should have finished school or we should have now finished and we are still here and so emotionally they were down...so were kept encouraging them that it is well and by all means they would complete school...so we just had to encourage and even it looks like its prolonging and sometimes you get discouraged you just have to talk to them that it is well because its better late than never...”. (FGD4, R1, Female, Accra Royal Sch)

“some students are genuinely scared of removing their masks and think they will get the virus immediately. The fear of getting the virus has definitely left a psychological mark. Children are also physically more hesitant to hug, shake hands or have any physical contact with anyone other than their friends. We still don’t know the long term effects....”. (FGD1, R1, Female, German Swiss Int. Sch)

Despite the pitfalls experienced by the various schools, some private schools recorded gains in the area of admission of students into their schools while others recorded gains in academic test scores and grades.

“so during this period, we made some 87 admissions because these schools were not giving much attention to those students and so we got these new additions from nearby schools due to the intervention we made for online teaching and learning...because we had a plan in place and accepted the challenge...even if it was something that was going to affect us financially we were ready...as we know technology would advance and knowledge that would be acquired, would have been important to the development of the students. So we accepted the

challenge and now most our children are abreast with the ICT...so digital literacy has been enhanced”. (FGD3, R1, Male, North Little Legon School)

The sub-theme focusing on the effect on teaching and learning revealed that the closure of schools negatively impacted on the delivery of teaching and learning for most schools during the focused group discussion. Some of the views of the participants are expressed in representative quotes:

“because teaching was no more made on the platform that we used to that is not in the classroom but on the internet and so it became it difficult initially for teacher to adapt and so any assignment that we give on the virtual platform and you are not with the students it leads to poor academic work output. If it was on the board or in the classroom setting, the child can ask you all kinds of questions, you understand me but now you explain and instructions given but students are not able to finish with the tasks assigned to them. Because it’s no more face to face, the child is not able to perform or follow instructions to get work done... it would definitely affect work output”. (FGD8, R3, Male, Akwei Mem. Govt. Sch)

“as for teachers especially the private schools, it affected us a lot...financially they were not sound, so if they were not sound financially, can you force them to teach? How can you force them...they can’t do it...because for one year, some of them were not paid because of the nature of impact on revenue generated from fees were not forth coming and so some teachers were unable to deliver on teaching services...so if for one year, parents are not paying fees, for teachers to be paid, therefore because of that...so most teachers became dull and it affected them big time”. (FGD7, R4, Male, St. Charles School)

“it means that you would have to repeat all what you have taught them since they have forgotten all thatthey have to be revised and so we have been teaching those things we were doing and so we do it again...sometimes you get to the classroom and it seems you have not done anything at all...so we had to go back and do what we were supposed to do....what they were supposed to do we had to break it down into smaller bits... because it looks like they had forgotten everything and lost a lot of skills during that period of closure of schools...” (FGD4, R3, Female, Accra Royal School)

“teachers may not have had access to printers and scanners to send materials. Teachers had to research materials online which may not have exactly been perfect for their student’s needs but it was not as close as they could get to the material that they would have sent originally. Teachers were using their personal devices for WhatsApp calls and sending videos and photos of work to be done. This was a negative financial cost on teachers as it was using their personal data”. (FGD1, R3, Male, German Swiss Int. Sch)

“there were lots of online material sent but some students who can’t print this out found it difficult to read from a screen. Also some students learn by using physical objects eg.in maths using cubes etc so without access to that it would have affected their learning”. (FGD1, R4, Male, German Swiss Int. Sch)

“all lesson plans and class preparation were from research online and finding material that fit their requirements so that it could be easily sent and reduced planning time. Teachers also had to make sure their online lessons were accessible to everyone as they could not spend time alone with students who found learning challenging”. (FGD1, R2, Female, German Swiss Int. Sch)

“formally the new curriculum especially the JHS one, some of the I mean new curriculum, if you don’t have books to that effect how can you deliver effective teaching and learning? So the teacher has to go on the net and get some available information to teach students...and so it would impact negatively teaching and learning process in school mostly private schools...some of the books of the new curriculum have not been printed, so the books are not there to guide teaching and learning...”. (FGD7, R3, Male, St. Charles School)

The third objective of the study sought to find out measures put in place to mitigate the impact of the closure of school’s on student’s learning and academics. Some respondents revealed that despite the measures put in place using various online platform, it was not as effective compared to face-to-face teaching during class sessions:

“it wasn’t because most of the parents of our students were market women and so if you go to the market, you would see that their phones are off and some also are not on whatsapp...and due illiteracy and the nature of their occupation, it is only a few that are on whatsapp...”. (FGD7, R4, Male, St. Charles School)

“internet connectivity, not understanding the technology-eg. not knowing how to access a document. Not having the right technology or band width on devices to be able to download videos like flash videos or even being able to download pdf.”. (FGD1, R1, Female, German Swiss Int. Sch)

Some participants revealed some of the challenges they encountered during this period which is expressed in representative quotes below:

“the challenges were many, such as it was no longer the way of teaching as we had to move from face-to-face class lessons to holding virtual classes, the way of presenting lessons was also affected, you are on the video or audio and you have to talk and explain...in a certain way and you present and show the

examples...but if it was in a normal class, the child would interact with you...the child can contribute and when there is assignment the child can ask questions...”. (FGD8, R4, Female, Akwei Mem. Govt. Sch)

“the children, I think the collection of the work, because if the child has not heard of it, how can she come and collect the work...and some are not ready to come...it has even led to me losing some students to other schools...because I had a greater number of students...my population was about 655, as I speak to you my population is now 592...which means I have lost some substantial number of students...my end there was isn’t pregnancy, but what they said was that when the students writes an exams from the government schools, the chances of getting into government schools was very high...so some students have gone there”.(FGD7, R2, Male, St. Charles School)

“it was mainly a geographical location, as some teachers faced the challenges of having to travel from their homes to the school due to the lack of internet connectivity and also our salaries were halved...even though the school provided data some of teachers in the middle of the lessons, their data could run out...they would get it on their own and call the office for cash from the administrator...and some of them had to borrow money to buy laptop...and also initially getting used to the applications such as using zoom was a challenge...”. (FGD3, R1, Male, North Little Legon Sch)

“it was mainly financial... as financially some teachers could not cater for themselves but it really affected the private schools because our salaries were not forthcoming thus making life difficult for us teachers...and emotionally and physically we were really affected...” (FGD6, R2, Male, World Gospel Int. Sch)

“the only challenge is that teachers had a lot of work to do in terms of loss of knowledge and how to get students to remember what was taught was a challenge and so how to bring the mind back was really a challenge...we had to do a lot of talking...”. (FGD4, R1, Female, Accra Royal School)

“there are some things you would want to do but cannot do due to the bureaucratic nature of our educational system...”. (FGD5, R2, Male, St. Mary’s Sch)

Some respondents made some recommendation which they considered essential going forward in addressing the challenges faced by students and teachers.

“eeeh going forward, the new normal has become part of us and so we have done the initial set up and so we hope to continue with it with pilot sessions...so going forward with the new normal, we would need to have lessons streamed online for those in person and those at home...as we speak now, we have CCTV camera’s everywhere on our campus and projectors everywhere and we

have books in most of our classes now online and so regardless of what happens next, a lesson can successfully be undertaken...so the students can access these books online should covid intensify again...and when it comes to the covid protocol, we adhere to the covid protocols seriously...". (FGD3, R2, Male, North Little Legon Sch)

"we need more innovation in education since we have to educate parents to know that we are in the age of technology and so they are certain things that they need for their children so that incase some of these things such as teachers upload their work online, it can be accessed by both parents and teachers...because most of them do not have laptops and phones and so even if you want to have a zoom meeting with them, how to get them, would be difficult and they can't and so parents have to understand that we are in the age of technology and explain to them the reason why we have bought this technology...". (FGD5, R1, Male, St. Mary's Sch)

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

Based on the outcome of the study, this chapter presents the summary of findings of the research, conclusion and recommendations which are supported by both primary and secondary data. The findings were analyzed according to themes developed. which reveals largely a negative impact on students learning due to the closure of schools at the onset of the spread of the coronavirus in Ghana. The findings also reveal that public schools were largely unprepared when they were asked to close down which did affect their students, however for most of the private schools they quickly adopted innovative measures such as online platforms to mitigate the impact on their students and academic calendar. The findings further reveal some moderate gains in student's test scores, knowledge and exams in most private schools while public schools recorded a drastic decline in student's test scores, skills and knowledge. There was also a widespread challenge across all schools in relation to internet connectivity, student's ability to understand concepts, lack of guidance at home and support systems.

5.1 Summary of Findings

In order to answer the first research question of this study which is (How did schools react to the closure of school's nationwide by the Government of Ghana?), respondents or participants from the various schools were asked various questions in relation to their initial reactions when schools were close down due to the spread of the coronavirus. The study found out that most parents were not happy that schools had to close down, heads of schools had not choice than to comply with the directive from the Government of Ghana and for some teachers and parents, it was a major blow

to them including all stakeholders within the educational sector. As a way of informing parents of the closure of schools, some schools revealed that they had reached parents through emails, phone-calls and some relied on media broadcasts while some schools organized PTA meetings to engage parents on decision taken to migrate online and seek their support during the time students were at home. Despite, the initial reaction by most schools, public schools largely were not prepared to migrate online due to infrastructural challenges, bureaucracy within the system of education and the lack of parental support to students during the lockdown period.

The second objective of the study was to examine the nature of impact of the closure of schools due to the spread of the coronavirus on student's learning and teaching. The findings reveal a widespread negative impact on students learning and academic progress. This was evidenced by the outcome of test scores recorded and exams administered during this period which showed poor grades and loss of skills and knowledge. The nature of disruption of the academic calendar had a toll on the various schools but most private schools were able to mitigate the negative impact on student's learning through improvised systems put in place such online platforms and pick-up sessions of learning materials from schools which led considerable gains in academic performance of students. However public schools largely could not improvise any major effective system and had to rely on government's directives particularly the Ministry of Education which resulted in a large scale drop of grades, loss of knowledge and social skills.

The findings also reveal that children found it difficult to adapt to the new ways of doing things particularly those from low income homes and had to rely on their parents who were not always present at home. Also, teachers found it difficult to deliver teaching and learning effectively due to limited resources as books online were not particularly guided by the books in school. The study also found out that most private schools put in some intervention plan for the lost periods of

study in order to meet designed educational targets and curriculum requirements. The study also found out that some category of students who were much affected included the very poor ones academically who were already struggling and needed support at home, female students who were left home without parental care also got pregnant and students whose parents could afford to buy them electronic devices to use at home for their studies.

The outcome of the study also reveals that the academic calendar was affected as some respondents cited a waste of time due to the interruption of studies, delay in preparing students for exams and unattainable targets set for the academic year. Consequently, this had a toll on teacher's lesson plans and class preparations as they had to modify it to meet targets amidst challenges in some students understanding specific concepts in science subjects or courses. Most respondents agreed that the virtual class was not as effective as the face-to-face class sessions since it didn't allow them contacts with students where difficulties faced by students could be addressed. As such there was limited interaction between students and teachers. Most mediums used by schools to deliver teaching and learning was via online platforms during this period included whatsapp, zoom, google classrooms and emails for submission of assignments, tasks and formal communication. The sub-theme on emotional and psychological well-being sought to find out how students were impacted by the sudden closure of schools. The study findings showed that most students were not able to socialize and as a result became isolated from their friends impacting on their social well-being, some students also were unstable emotionally as they could not know their fate in relation to academic targets and some students were scared of removing their nose masks due to the fear of contracting the virus.

The third objective sought to find out measures put in place to mitigate the impact of the closure of schools on student's learning. Some challenges recorded included poor internet connectivity

and accessibility, ineffective virtual classes, school dropouts, financial demands, inability to travel during this period, backlog of academic work, unpaid salaries and in some instance halved salaries, disrupted lesson plans and academic calendar. Some respondents suggested that the ‘new normal’ has become part of us and as such educational institutions must begin to be innovative in the delivery of teaching and learning via online platforms and adoptions of new technology that would replace the old method of doing things.

5.2 Conclusions

The findings of the study reveal the disruptive nature of the closure of schools due to the spread of the coronavirus. The reaction of the various school’s due to the closure of schools nationwide reveals the nature of the spread of pandemic posing a danger to the public health of many Ghanaians especially students. The decision to close down school’s therefore came as a surprise to many stakeholders who reacted with a shocks due to the decision which would ultimately affect their wards or children’s education.

The closure of schools, therefore impacted heavily on the academic calendar as most public schools could regain time lost which also led to a drastic drop in academic test scores, exams, skills and knowledge across board despite some moderate gains by private schools in relation to academic gains in skills, knowledge and test scores. The disruption affected negatively lesson plans and the emotional well-being of students. Despite some efforts to mitigate the impact, some challenges were encountered which made the delivery of quality teaching and learning a problem.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed for consideration by stakeholders, policy makers and civil society groups in consolidating the gains made within the educational sector. Based on the findings, it is suggested online platforms and virtual sessions must become part of the system

to pave way for the digitization of education. This has become very essential since the pandemic reveals how vulnerable the system can be if we are not pragmatic in ensuring that educational infrastructure is well abreast with the modern times. As such stakeholders are encouraged to begin to invest in digital education for all schools and students which would demand heavy investment into this sector so as to reap the necessary dividends within the educational sector.

The study also recommends the creation of a common platform of sharing information and coordination of educational related data with regards to new findings, policy inputs, new methods of teaching and learning among the various students so as to engineer some form of innovation in teaching and learning since we live in a global competitive world. The opportunity to interact among teachers and the pool of resources available to them would further strengthen their capacity to deliver in these new normal times. This is very vital since there lies a vast gap between public and private school in teaching and learning methodology, infrastructure, welfare and school leadership which requires urgent attention by policy makers within the educational sector.

Lastly, a capacity building program or initiative should be undertaken to equip teachers with the necessary skills to meet the vast changing dynamics within the educational sector. This provision of capacity building opportunities serves to augment the already acquired knowledge by teachers within the educational sector. This should be undertaken to help teachers acquire soft skills in IT related educational programs that are subject specific designed to meet the changing trends within the teaching field and provide flexibility for both teachers and students in relation to class assignments, tasks, exams and academic targets. This would go a long way to maximize the potential of teachers and students. Findings in this study, provides policy makers and major stakeholders within the educational sector, some guidelines in the future, when such pandemic occurs again.

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APPENDIX A

GERMAN SWISS INT. (FGD1)	MULTIKIDS INCLUSIVE ACADEMY (FGD2)	NORTH LITTLE LEGON CAMPUS (FGD3)	ACCRA ROYAL PRIM & JHS (FGD4)	ST. MARY'S PRIMARY & JHS (FGD5)	WORLD GOSPEL INT. PREP. (FGD6)	ST CHARLES PRIM. JHS (FGD7)	AKWEI MEM. GOVT SCHOOL (FGD8)
R1- Female	R1- Female	R1- Male	R1- Female	R1- Male	R1- Male	R1- Male	R1 – Male
R2- Female	R2- Male	R2- Male	R2- Male	R2- Male	R2- Male	R2- Male	R2 – Male
R3- Male	R3- Male	R3- Female	R3- Female	R3- Female	R3- Male	R3- Male	R3- Male
R4- Male	R4- Male	R4- Male	R4- Male	R4- Male	R4- Male	R4- Male	R4- Female