

A RESEARCH PAPER ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND STATUS OF BASIC EDUCATION IN KENYA

By

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ABSTRACT

Education is the backbone of any nature of development in any nation worldwide be it social, economic, cultural, political and technological development just to mention a few. However, Covid-19 pandemic paralyzed the entire system of education and hence brought an extremely great uncertainty in the education sector in the entire world, Kenya included. This research paper therefore gives a better understanding of the nature of the uncertainty caused and brought about by Covid-19 pandemic on the education sector in order to chat the best way(s) possible to navigate through it. The study gives the overall views, challenges and possible suggestions particularly in relation to Kenya. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this research paper will enable the government of Kenya and all stakeholders in the education sector within and without Kenya to identify and implement emergency response policies frameworks to mitigate Covid-19 pandemic and other similar emerging disasters that could impact negatively on the education sector. It is further hoped that this paper will contribute to the existing body of research knowledge by laying a base that will enable future researchers to research further in this area of study.

Keywords: *Covid-19 pandemic, status, and basic education.*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

All the social, economic, cultural and technological developments that occur in any nation worldwide are anchored on the status of the system of education, training and research in that particular nation. Due to these, the government of Kenya, just like any other government globally invest heavily in its education sector. This is aimed at fast tracking the attainment of the sustainable development goals as well as achieving the national development goals like the Kenya's Vision twenty thirty and a springboard to the 'Big 4 agenda'. For instance, the government of Kenya introduced free primary education in the year 2002 and subsidized secondary education in the year 2007. The Kenyan government also rolled out the scheme of

supplying textbooks in all the primary and secondary schools in the entire republic of Kenya to attain a textbook ratio of 1:1. This ensured that each learner had a textbook in each subject that he / she is learning (Ministry of Education Sessional Paper, 2018). The government of Kenya does all these and many more because it is conscious of the critical importance education as well as the vital role played by the education sector in fostering the attainment of development in the nation.

However, as the government of Kenya as well as other nations globally strives to attain equitable access to free, fair, relevant and quality education, several challenges and disasters emerge which hinder the provision of the much needed quality education. These challenges emerge and affect both learners, teachers, learning institutions, parents and sometimes the whole society at large. Some of these common challenges include shortage of teachers, early pregnancies, early marriages, drug and substance abuse, poor nutrition, female genital mutilation (FGM), poverty, floods, famines, wars, just to mention a few. Kenya has highlighted some of these challenges and disasters in the Education Sector Disaster Management Policy of 2018 (Ministry of Education, 2018). However, these challenges have never paralyzed the entire education system since they either affect an individual, a learning institution, a given society / community or just a particular region. Nevertheless, in addition to these common challenges, a more recent challenge which has hit the entire education sector worldwide is the Covid-19 pandemic which firstly broke out in the year 2019 / 2020.

According to Areba (2020), lockdown and prolonged closure of learning institutions have long-term challenges moreso to the marginalized and most vulnerable children who are already experiencing barriers accessing education, or who are at higher risk of being excluded for a number of reasons. They include learners with disabilities, those in urban slums, informal settlements; remote locations, asylum seekers and refugees, and those whose families have lost livelihoods due to job cuts or businesses closures and casual jobs among other difficult situations. Regardless of these prevailing circumstances, the constitution of Kenyan provides for the right of every person to achieve the highest attainable standard of education, training and research (Republic of Kenya, 2010). This theoretical study will therefore attempts to suggest to remedies which can address the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on delivery of quality basic education in Kenya. A number of the solutions presented will focus on the marginalized and poor learners in the education system in Kenya. Such learners include children living in the remote and hardship areas, the girl child, the vulnerable children, the orphans, learners with extraordinary educational disabilities, learners from poor urban informal settlements, children in refugee camps, among others (Areba, 2020).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The disruption of teaching and learning as a result of the closure of all institutions of learning worldwide has really affected very many people negatively including guardians, parents, teachers, learners, support staffs working in learning institutions, suppliers of goods and services in learning institutions, among others. Of interest to this theoretical study are the learners at basic education level of education whose education has been paralyzed and crippled by Covid-19 pandemic. This is because staying at home for unknown duration denies the learners their right to receive and access quality basic education. The effect of this disruption is severe for the vulnerable underprivileged learners and their families since they mainly come from the hard to reach areas, urban informal settlements, poor rural areas, internal displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and many others. This is because the closure of learning institutions has brought numerous challenges to these learners hailing from diverse backgrounds. There is therefore a serious need to examine the challenges brought by Covid-19 pandemic on the learners and their education. Further, there is need to suggest some possible solutions which can be adapted to ensure and enhance delivery of inclusive, equitable, quality and relevant education that promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all learners equally.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. To examine the status of Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya.
- ii. To determine the current status of basic education in Kenya.
- iii. To find out the challenges posed on basic education by Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya.
- iv. To suggest possible interventions to enhance basic education during and after the Covid 19 pandemic period in Kenya.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This theoretical research will significantly enable all the stakeholders in the education sector in Kenya as well as the Ministry of Education (MoE) to formulate relevant policies and intervention measures that will enable them to readily deal with and respond to current emerging disasters, infirmities, and challenges such as Covid-19 pandemic among others when they erupt. Such measures will ensure the teaching and learning process to continue smoothly without being paralyzed. The study will significantly also enable the curriculum developers of basic education such as the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) to lay down the strategies of teaching health education and strengthening the life skills lessons in learning institutions offering the basic education curriculum in Kenya. The study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge more so in relation to Covid-19 pandemic and education. The study will also be a source of reference for future researchers who will further their studies in the same field / area of study.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The theoretical perspective which relevantly guided this theoretical study is the Classical Liberal Theory of Equal Opportunities. This theory was propagated by Sherman and Wood as cited by Njeru and Orodho (2003). Sherman and Wood advocated for the need of giving each learner equal opportunities in education. This theory asserts that each learner is born having some amount of ability which to some bigger margin is congenital and cannot be substantively changed. Hence, the education sector in any nation should be organized in a way that removes all forms of challenges that prevent innovative learners who hail from poor socio-economic backgrounds from taking full advantage of their innate talents which fast-track them to social promotion. This theory argues that social mobility is stimulated by equal educational opportunities. Based on this theory, education should remove all forms of obstacles or challenges that can hinder a learner from attaining his / her God-given innate talent. Those challenges could for example include challenges based on socio-cultural factors, socio-economic factors, ecological or geographical factors, political based factors, institution-based factors, gender based factors, and many other factors. Thus, education being a great equalizer should offers equal educational opportunities to learners from poor, vulnerable, underprivileged and marginalized families in order to accelerate them to social promotion.

The teaching and learning process was paralyzed unexpectedly when all institutions of learning were closed down suddenly due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. This closure has since then brought very many challenges to learners especially those from poor, underprivileged, marginalized, vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds. This is because the parents and guardians of such learners lack the ability to support the education of their children and also to provide the basic needs of their children. On the other side, the learners who come from the well endowed families are privileged because their parents and / or guardians have the ability to provide their basic needs like good food, decent shelter, good clothing, best medication. Such parents are able to support the education of their children by for example, giving them good digital gadgets like tablets, laptops, and smartphones which can enable the learners to continue learning online when they are at home. This therefore implies that it is glaringly impossible for learners from underprivileged families to attain access to education on an equal footing with learners from the privileged families (Njeru & Orodho, 2003). As such, the Classical Liberal Theory of Equal Opportunities was found to be suitable for the current study. This is because the Covid-19 pandemic has posed challenges which have affected the learners from the poor, marginalized and vulnerable families since their parents and / or guardians cannot afford to give them the basic necessities which they need both at home and in school. For instance, while the learners hailing from fortunate backgrounds are learning online through radios, televisions, YouTube, zoom, and other methods, the learners from the less or unfortunate backgrounds are not learning thus denying an equal educational opportunity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section purposes to examine the first and the second objectives of this study. As such, the literature which will be reviewed will attempted to explore information related to the status of Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya and the status of basic education in Kenya.

2.1 STATUS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC GLOBALLY AND IN KENYA

Covid-19 is a disease that is triggered by a novel strain of corona virus which is a group of viruses that mostly affect the respiratory system. The virus that causes COVID-19 is in a family of viruses called *Coronaviridae*. The viruses infect both animals and human beings. Human corona virus causes a mild illness that resembles a common cold. Some others strains of corona virus cause more severe illnesses types of common cold like Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). Human corona viruses are commonly spread through coughing droplets as well as interacting closely with an infected person or surface when not protected by touching, shaking hands, among others. The signs and symptoms of Covid-19 disease are typically respiratory symptoms such as coughing, shortness of breath, fever, and other cold like symptoms (WHO, 2020). Antibiotics do not work against these viruses.

The first place in the world where Covid-19 was firstly reported was in Wuhan - China in December 2019. The nation of China had reported 83,878 infected cases and 4636 deaths. The World Health Organization declared Covid-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of Global Concern by 30th January 2020 (WHO, 2020). Since then, Covid-19 has continued to spread exponentially in the whole world. In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared Covid-19 a worldwide pandemic due to its highly contagious nature (WHO, 2020). The pandemic had globally infected over 3.04 million people with over 211,305 deaths and over 895,261 confirmed recoveries by 28th April 2020. The data reported by the national authorities by then showed that United States of America was leading with over 988,469 infected cases, 56,253 death cases and 111,583 recoveries. Italy had 199,414 infected cases, 26,977 deaths and 66,624 recoveries. United Kingdom had 158,348 infections, 21,157 deaths and 809 recoveries. Spain reported 229,422 infected cases, 23,521 deaths and 120,832 recoveries.

The first Covid-19 cases were reported in Africa in early February 2020. As at 28th April 2020, Africa had reported 33,389 cases. The data from some individual African nations indicated that South Africa was leading with 4,793 infected reported cases, 90 deaths and 1,473 recoveries. Egypt was second with 4,782, infections, 337 deaths and 1,236 recoveries. Ghana had reported 1,550 infections, 11 deaths and 155 recoveries. Nigeria had reported 1,337 infections, 40 deaths and 255 recoveries. Tanzania reported 299 infections, 10 deaths and 48 recoveries. Uganda had 79 infected cases, no death and 47 recoveries while Rwanda had 207 infections, no death and 93 recoveries (Nation Media Newsplex Team, April 29th, 2020). The first case of Covid-19 was

reported in Kenya on 12th March 2020. The reported cases continued to spread and increase in the entire nation. According to the World Health Organization statistics, Kenya had recorded 707 deaths, 150 recoveries and 38,378 confirmed infection cases in October, 2020. There were 15,000 new cases in October alone. This implies that the positivity rate went up from 14% to 16% with deaths increasing by almost 140%. Most of these cases were concentrated in the counties of Nairobi, Mombasa and Kilifi, Kwale and Mandela with other cases spread across all counties.

Kenya is therefore a high risk country in relation to spreading Covid-19 in institutions of learning. This high risk factors is attributed to the high number of foreign learners in institutions of learning, high enrolment rates in schools, high number of refugees in refugee camps like Kakuma and Daadab, as well as other social cultural practices like communacircumcision (Areba, 2020). This high risk factor became evident after primary and secondary schools were reopened by the government of Kenya on Monday 12th of October 2020, new infection and death cases have been reported in these schools as a result of of Covid-19 disease. These institutions offer basic education to children below 18 year of age. These new infection cases of Covid-19 pandemic have been reported both among teachers, students and support staff. For instance, the first known case of a student with a confirmed Corona Virus infection in Kenya was reported in the Rift Valley Region, one week after schools reopened. Five students from two schools in Nandi County Test Positive for corona Virus. The schools mention are Kabote Adventist High School with one case and Lelmokwo Boys' High School with four confirmed cases. Most of these infected students experienced mild symptoms and moderate illness.

The respective principals of these schools confirmed that the teachers and the entire class who came into contact with the students have been told to quarantine for 14 days. The students who had contact in classroom and dormitory with these students were isolated including people like teachers they were in close contact with. This was done to provide adequate care and prevent further transmission of Corona Virus in the affected schools. The administrators of these High Schools said that the infected students attended classes for the first part of the day and interacted with several students before testing positive. This means that if a Corona Virus case is confirmed in a stable group, then the whole class must be quarantined for 14 days. This decision to quarantine the entire class will depend on how it is configured. Protocol states that; ***"A student must quarantine for 14 days, starting from the last day of contact with the infected case, even if he or she tests negative"***. If an outbreak is detected in several classrooms, then the entire class or the whole school could be closed.

New Covid–19 pandemic cases were also reported at Bahati Girls' High School which is in the Rift Valley Region and specifically in Nakuru County. The County Commissioner of Baringo County in Rift Valley Region reported that at least 38 Form Four students of Kabarnet Boys' High School tested positive for Covid–19. Likewise, the new outbreak of Covid–19 pandemic in the Coast Region of Kenya led to the closure of two secondary schools in the month of October of the year 2020 in Mombasa County. Several infection cases were reported. The principal of Tononoka Secondary School in Mombasa County likewise died due to Covid–19 disease. In the Western Region of Kenya, close to 60 infections cases of Covid–19 pandemic were reported in Kolanya Boys' Secondary school which is in Busia County. Out of this infection cases, over 50 were students, 4 were teachers and 6 were support staff. All these infected cases were quarantined within the school compound. In Siaya County which is in Nyanza Region of Kenya, infection cases were reported at Maranda High School in October 2020. More cases are still being reported. With measures to prevent the spread of Covid–19 hugely reliant on information campaigns, hand washing and social distancing, information targeted for consumption by children is scarce or non-existent (Areba, 2020). Social distancing in learning institutions may be challenging due to congestion. Hand washing may also pose a challenge due to limited supply of water and sanitizers.

2.2 STATUS OF EDUCATION IN THE WORLD AND IN KENYA

2.2.1 STATUS OF EDUCATION IN THE WORLD

It is already indeed well documented that Covid–19 pandemic is the worst health, economic and social crisis to face the world since World War II. As such, in order to curb Covid–19 from spreading further, several nations globally reacted by closing down all the areas that experience high social interaction, learning institutions included. The closure of learning institutions brought extensive societal and economic consequences which affected learners, educators and families. The effects of the closure is being felt highly for the first time worldwide by educators, students and parents despite learning having been interrupted locally in the past by factors like strikes, famine, wars, diseases, civil unrest, among other (Williamson, Eynon, & Potter, 2020, p. 107). Institutional cessations in reaction to Covid–19 has brought forth numerous economic and social issues, including digital learning, learner debt, homelessness, food insecurity, access to health care, internet, housing, and disability services (Areba, 2020). These effects are more severe for underprivileged children and their families, leading to nutritional challenges, childcare challenges, and resultant financial cost implication to households who could not work (Areba, 2020).

In relation to the education sector, Covid–19 pandemic led to the disruption of teaching and learning in all institutions of learning worldwide. The World Health Organization reported that learners in institutions of learning are at high risk of being infected or infecting others due to the

nature of the congested environments they find themselves in as well as the close contact they always have with other learners, teachers, support staff and parents (WHO, 2020). This high risk of infection necessitated the closure of all institutions of learning in the world. The worldwide closure of all learning institutions due to Covid-19 pandemic greatly affected the entire education sector. By 26th April 2020, the pandemic led to the interruption of the education of over 1.5 billion students of all ages in the world which nearly equals to 90% of the global student population (UNESCO, 2020a; 2020b; UNICEF, 2020). On 23rd March 2020, Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) gave a brief shelving of Cambridge O Level, Cambridge International AS & A Level, Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge AICE Diploma, and Cambridge Pre-U exams for May / June 2020 series across all states. International Baccalaureate examinations were also suspended (UNESCO, 2020c).

In reaction to institutional closures, UNESCO and various governments suggested the utilization of distance learning programs and open educational applications and platforms that institutions and instructors can use to reach students distantly and limit the interruption of education (UNESCO, 2020d). Thus, the closure of learning institutions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic led to a shift in the way teaching and learning occur in many nations globally. It changed from the traditional face to face mode of delivering education to eLearning to ensure that education continues. ELearning became the most appropriate method of teaching and learning during this Covid-19 pandemic period because learners were not in institutions of learning physically. The normal physical face to face method of teaching and learning could no longer be implemented fruitfully globally because learners were separated from their teachers and colleagues by this pandemic which led to the closure of schools. ELearning is therefore expected to be the best working solution for furthering the education of learners by providing educational opportunities to the vulnerable learners during this pandemic period (Bozkurt, 2019b, p. 510).

This undertaking was already marred with various challenges (UNESCO, 2020d). It is worth noting that eLearning is based on summative assessment and not formative assessment which help learners to get continuous feedback and improve the quality of learning. Online teaching do not also consider the learners' interaction and instructor feedback (Selvam, 2020). Feedback and frequent interaction with learners are the key success factors in any courses (Baran, Correia & Thompson, 2013). However, the World Bank (2020a; p.1) noted that as eLearning is being provided, "failure is common, and success is often a result of experience and learning from past failures". The World Bank (2020b) further said that education systems must use existing infrastructure and various learning mediums like eLearning to ensure learners are engaged and continue to learn. Although digital technology can facilitate eLearning, most schools, learners and / or teachers in low- and middle-income countries lack access to high-speed broadband or

digital devices needed to fully use eLearning. As such, education systems need to consider alternative ways for students to continue learning when they are not in school like during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

2.2.2 BASIC EDUCATION STATUS IN KENYA

The national assembly of Kenya (the parliament) enacted the Basic Education Act No. 14 of 2013. The act was assented on 14th January, 2013 and it commenced on 25th January, 2013. This 2013 Basic Education Act of Kenya defined **basic education** as "*the educational programmes offered and imparted to a person in an institution of basic education*". The Act defined an **institution of basic education** as "*a public or private institution or facility used wholly or partly, regularly or periodically for conducting basic education and training and includes a school, a tuition facility, an educational centre, an academy, a research institution, a school correctional facility or a borstal institution*". As such, in the context of this theoretical study, basic education will be perceived to be the education offered in a pre-primary, primary or secondary school to an individual (in this case a child) who has not attained the age of eighteen years. According to this Act, **pre-primary education** is the education offered to a child of four or five years before joining level one in a primary school while **primary education** is the education imparted to a child who has completed pre-primary education. On the other side, **secondary education** is the education given to a child who has completed primary education.

According to this Basic Education Act of 2013 and the 2010 constitution of Kenya Republic of Kenya (2010), every school going child has the right to receive quality free and compulsory basic education which is relevant. However, the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic infringed into this basic right of children of accessing education by disrupting the normal teaching and learning process in all institutions offering of basic education in Kenya. Covid-19 pandemic has indeed gone into record for being the worst crisis to ever paralyzed the entire education sector in Kenya since independence. However, in line with the 2013 Basic Education Act and the 2010 constitution of Kenya, it is the duty of the government of Kenya as well as all parents to protect their children from any form or kind of dangers (including the Covid-19 pandemic) when they are in their institutions of learning. Hence, that is why the Government saw it fit to close all institutions of basic education in Kenya on 15th of March 2020 to contain the spread of Covid-19. This was because children would be safer at home than in a congested environments in schools as the high population of learners coming from varied backgrounds made the institutions to be taken as high-risk areas. This closure affected the over 15 million learners in institutions of basic education in Kenya. Some learning institutions were changed to health facilities and isolation centres. On 18th March 2020, the government postponed all national examinations in primary and secondary schools. Co-curricular activities were also disrupted. The private schools were greatly affected since their operations depended mainly on school fees payments. Some of them sent their teachers home and declared it as 'temporary layoff' due to the inactivity at schools.

In a nutshell, it can be stated that Covid–19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on children, teachers, and learning institutions in Kenya. On the other side, this pandemic has made parents and guardians of learners to now know the importance and value of teachers as well as learning institutions in the lives of their children. This is because online lessons can never replace the face to face teaching and learning effectively. There is therefore a serious need to now trust our teachers to take care of our children and grand-children as we start the journey of recovery from this pandemic and returning our children back to school after the pandemic.

In order to ensure that learners continue to learn while they are at home as a result of Covid–19 pandemic, the Kenyan government through the Ministry of Education decided to foster the education of learners via eLearning. This was achieved through radio and television lessons which were designed and offered by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD). Mobile Service Providers like Safaricom and Airtel also offered some lessons via Short Message Services (SMSs). Further, teachers in some schools also conducted some lessons using some digital technologies like WhatsApp, Webinars, Zoom, among other. These teachers achieved their lessons through digital curriculum contents like animations, softcopy notes, online live lessons, among others. However, the attainment and actualization of eLearning more so among learners in Kenya was faced with a number of challenges as outlined in below.

3. METHODOLOGY

Based on the nature of the objectives of this study, this study used a qualitative case approach (Yin, 1984). Further, this theoretical research paper mainly relied greatly on reviewing of secondary data material in order to analyze and discuss the impact of Covid–19 pandemic on the education of learners at the basic education level of education in Kenya. This is because this study is basically a theoretical review. The secondary data reviewed also aided in determine and suggesting the possible solutions which could be adapted in an attempt to address the challenges posed by Covid–19 pandemic on the basic education of learners in learning institutions in Kenya.

4. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN BASIC EDUCATION DUE TO COVID–19 PANDEMIC

The continuous spread of Covid–19 and it's exponential rise globally has led to serious immediate short term and long term socio-economic effects on the economies of individual citizen as well as that of their countries. For instance, As the number of deaths caused by Covid–19 pandemic continues to rise worldwide, very many children are being left orphans and hence become vulnerable to all forms of exploitations and abuses. Also, the closure of businesses and learning institutions has led to many and diverse challenges like physical and psychological health risks, widespread loss of jobs and incomes, family confinement, isolation and economic vulnerability (Olingo, 2020). Some other challenges which have emerged in the society at large

as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic include increase in gender based violence, domestic violence, early marriages, teenage pregnancies, drug and substance abuse, among others.

In addition to the social, economic, cultural, emotional political and technological issues brought by this pandemic on the entire spheres of human life worldwide, Covid-19 has impacted the education sector negatively. The unexpected closure posed several severe challenges to parents, learners, educators, and authorities as they grapple with the interrupted learning and changes in their social lives. The following sub-sections briefly describe the key challenges brought by the interruption of basic education due to Covid-19 pandemic thereby addressing the third objective of this study which focused on finding out the challenges posed on basic education by Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya.

4.1 ENACTMENT OF EMERGENCY POLICY DOCUMENTS ON CURRENT EMERGING ISSUES

Various disasters have been hitting the education sector in Kenya for a long period of time. Some of those disasters include heavy downpours, fire outbreaks, community wars, cattle raids, terrorist attacks, collapsing of building in learning institutions, just to mention a few. Most of these disasters destroyed infrastructure in a number of learning institutions in the country. As a result of these disasters, the government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education (MoE) formulated the Disaster Management policy in July 2018 (Ministry of Education, 2018). This policy stipulated a framework which could be used to manage disaster in learning institutions in Kenya. The main objective of this policy was to enhance the safety of learners, teachers and support staff when they are mostly inside learning institutions in the Kenyan. The policy highlighted mitigation strategies like strengthening and developing capacities at all levels of personnel and learners on disaster management in the education sector as well as steps of guiding the the coordination and management of emergencies in the education sector.

This 2018 Disaster Management Policy reinforces the other documents which are already in operation in the education sector in Kenya. These existing documents include the Sessional Paper on Reforming Education and Training for Sustainable Development of 2018 (Ministry of Education, 2018); the Health and Safety Standard Guidelines for institutions of 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2008); the Education Sector Policy on Peace Education of 2014 (Ministry of Education, 2014), among others. However, according to Areba (2020), the major weakness of all the policies that are in operation in the education sector in Kenya is that they only address immediate emergencies in specific time frame and context. These disasters include fires in schools, floods, peace and routine common safety guidelines (Areba, 2020). Such disasters do not interrupt teaching and learning programs in the entire nation because they only occur in a

given specific region or area at a time. This means that learning can be going on in other area of the country except that specific area which has npbeen hit by that disaster.

Nevertheless, worldwide pandemics which paralyze the entire education sector such as the Covid–19 pandemic have never been addressed in the policy documents existing in Kenya. Also, the education sector is deficient of rules and regulation that stipulate clearly how teaching and learning can be conducted online when learners are at home as a result of similar pandemic. Further, there are no clear cut laws which can protect learners and teachers from cyber-attacks and hacking when they are accessing educational content via the Internet. As such, there is a serious need to re-evaluate and hence amend all the existing policy documents in the education sector to incorporate more other contemporary emerging issues of global concern.

4.2 LACK OF PHYSICAL TUITION FOR LEARNERS

All forms of tuition were previously prohibited and outlawed in Kenya by the Basic Education Act of 2018. It could attract a fine of up to Ksh 100000 or an imprisonment of one year or both according to section 37 of the Basic Education Act. Furthermore, when the first case Covid–19 was reported in Kenya in the month of March in the year 2020, the Cabinet Secretary of Education, Prof. George Magoha fired a warning to those tutors who will be found holding tuition as a way of learning during period of the pandemic. This came after the Ministry of Education learned that some teachers especially those from private schools and those employed by the Board of Management (BoM) of schools were holding private tuition during this Covid–19 holiday to cushion them against the financial effects that are brought by Covid-19 pandemic. Such private tutions were conducted in specific private places like in hired halls, residential homes of parents,and houses of teachers, just to mention a few. This was aimed at supporting the efforts by the Ministry of Health (MoH) of reducing the spread of Covid–19. Further, many library services in Kenya were momentarily put on halt from March 15th, 2020 when President Uhuru Kenyatta ordered for the closure of all schools and other public converging places in the country after Kenya reported its first COVID-19 case. Areba (2020) indicated that this physical tuition has momentarily been substituted with digital learning.

4.3 INCREASE IN GENDER BASED ISSUES AMONG LEARNERS

Various nations worldwide implemented different strategies like lockdowns, curfew, and others as measures to either stop or reduce the spread of Covid–19. However, some of these measures have lead to heightening of gender based related issues in the society like domestic and sexual violence. These issues have generally and majorly affected learners at large and especially school going adolescent girls as reported by many nations (Mutavati, Zaman, & Olajide, 2020). As such, fear is rising that the prolonged closure of schools might being consequences like an increase in dropout rates due to early pregnancies, early marriages, child labour, gender-based violence especially among vulnerable communities like those living in slums, rural areas, pastoral and

nomadic communities. For instance, it was reported that the mental health of students in India was affected because there was this wrong notion that students had a lot of time due to being at home (Sharma, 2020). This wrong assumption affected performing of household chores by students (Sharma, 2020). Cases of domestic violence and domestic abuses were also reported in India. Based on the very broad brainstorming on Sharma (2020) Facebook post, Harashim (2020) summarised the discussion.

A study done in the period of Ebola showed that closure of schools led to increased gender-based violence, early teenage pregnancies, early child marriage, exploitation and other forms of abuse against school going adolescent girls (Bandiera, Buehren, Goldstein, Rasul & Smurra, 2019). Global Partnership for Education (2020) warned that “the impact of Covid–19 on adolescent girls is likely to surpass that caused by the Ebola epidemic”. A rise in cases of female genital mutilation (FGM) have also been reported in some nations. It us therefore feared that all these issues might lead to an upsurge of the drop-out rates among learners due to the abrupt prolonged cessation of schools (UNESCO, 2020b). Underprivileged, at-risk, or homeless learners are more often likely not to report to school after the closures are ended, and the impact will often be a life-long disadvantage from lost opportunities (Baker, 2020). This may lead to low transition rates of learners thus undermining the already laid down novel strategies in the Kenyan Education sector to ensure more access as evident in 100% transition policy.

4.4 LACK OF eLEARNING FACILITIES BY LEARNERS

UNESCO reacted to the closure of learning institutional due to Covid–19 pandemic by recommending the use of distance learning platforms, open education applications, and any other platforms that institutions and teachers can use to get in touch with students distantly and minimize the interruption of learning (UNESCO, 2020a). The success of the eLearning programme adapted by most nations worldwide greatly depended on the availability of digital facilities like access to internet, data and devices to ensure that teaching and learning continues. However, technical issues like inaccessibility of technology, inadequate quick dependable internet data access, and lack of desktops / laptops have propagated a remarkably sharp difference between the nations that have digital facilities and those that do not have. Paucity of access to technology or sound internet connectivity is a hurdle to continuous learning. This is because it has barred learners particularly those from underprivileged families and those in rural regions.

For example, by 2019, only 39.6% of Africans had internet access compared to 87.7% of Europeans and 95% of North Americans (Internet World Stats, 2020). Socio-economic factors like gender, age, employment, educational background, neighbourhood and household income further widen the gap of access through inequalities in bandwidth distribution, data price and

internet speed (Rohs, & Ganz, 2015). Haßler et al (2020) indicated that there is a marked difference in the ability to access laptops, smartphones, feature phones, televisions and radios between high, middle and low income people in different nations. Learners from high income families can access eLearning easily through laptops and smartphones while those from low income families rely more on television and radio. Marginalised people like those in remote rural areas do not even have access to television and radio. The devices are not even enough when they are in the family to simultaneously meet the educational needs of multiple children in the family and the needs of parents who need them for remote working.

Internet connectivity is also another perennial technical issue that should be addressed since it is not adequate to support eLearning. For instance, Statista (2020) reports that internet penetration in India is around 50%. Only upscale private schools provide eLearning to their learners using Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Moodle or Google Classroom and other learning platforms. However, these virtual learning mode have left thousands of learners from disadvantaged communities and those in public schools at a very disadvantaged state due to prevalence of poor connectivity, lack of digital devices and power shortages. This simply implies that eLearning has deepened social injustices and social inequalities in the education sector rather than bridging the gap (Olcott, 2020). Despite the little gains made by the government of Kenya in relation to integration of technology in education, there are inadequacies in internet connectivity, digital skills among educators, digital content, and digital guidelines to use in content delivery. Furthermore, unreliable power supply, attitude, and rapid change in technology are other constraints (MoE Sessional Paper, 2018)

In Kenya, the only best option which was suitable to be adopted for the education sector was a shift from face to face learning to eLearning. The eLearning system of education was preferred by the government through the Ministry of Education to ensure that learners' education in the country do not sink during this Covid-19 pandemic period when children are not in schools but they are at home with their parents. The government through the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) adopted remote teaching to support eLearning. The online education was delivered via Kenya Education Cloud, television and radio lessons. However, the learners from poor, vulnerable and marginalized family have limited finances to access these mediums of learning thus worsening inequality in accessing relevant quality education (MoE, 2020).

However, a very big percentage of children at the basic level of education in Kenya have been left out since they cannot access eLearning programme provided by KICD during this period of

Covid–19 pandemic. This is attributed to reasons like lack of internet connectivity and lack of power supply in remote areas. Also, not all homes have access to these digital platforms and even if they have it, the conditions for using them leave out some learners. This is because parents prefer other options like listening to news or watching sports rather than learning lessons. Most learners can also not even access eLearning devices like smartphones, tablets, laptops, computers, televisions, radios, among others. This is because their parents cannot afford to buy these devices for them due to the high poverty levels in most households. Some of the devices which these learners have may not be compatible with the digital content that is available online. Further, the electricity used by learners to charge these devices may not be consistently enough. As such, it is crystal clear that learners who are privileged to have data, device and digital literacy are able to adapt eLearning faster than those who cannot afford. The same factors affect the learners in both primary and secondary schools leading to unequal access to digital learning tools by thousands of children in Kenya. All these escalates the struggles which learners are facing in order to cope up with distance learning in the absence of internet at home and other educational learning resource centres like library services, physical tuition, among others (Hauck & Stanglin, 2020).

4.5 LACK OF BASIC NEEDS AND NECESSITIES BY LEARNERS

Schools in Kenya play a vital role in protecting and providing the basic needs of children more so those coming from poor, vulnerable, marginalized, urban slum, and rural areas. A good diet is essential for the cognitive development and academic performance of learners. Most of these children rely on the food provided through the school feeding program provided by government and partners to get a meal to eat when they are in their institutions of learning in order to provide them with some level of nourishment to boost their nutrition (Bozkurt, Jung, Vladimirschi, Schuwer, & Fontys, 2020). With the closure of schools due to the outbreak of Covid–19 pandemic, many children who rely on them for these basic needs may experience hunger and suffer detrimental nutritional effects (MoE, 2020). Quite a number of learners in Kenya do not have enough food to eat while they are at home. This is because most of their parents and / or guardians cannot afford to buy for them food. Lack of provision of food to these learners is attributed to the high poverty level of majority of the parents and / or guardians in the country. As such, most of these learners are right now suffering when they are at home since they cannot access this little daily food which is offered in school. This is especially the case for children who come from poor families living in slums and rural areas. Parents who had not budgeted to feed the children during this period have to dig deeper into their pockets to adjust to the situation.

Some learners lack a reasonable shelter to put up in it. This is because some family were displaced by the floods which occurred during this Covid–19 pandemic. The houses of their parents and / or guardians were either swept away by floods or were submerged in water brought about by the high rainfall. Further, the families of some learners were either locked out or chased

out of the rented houses which their parents and / or guardians rented. This occurred because their parents and / or guardians were unable to pay their landlords house rent for several months. Other landlords decided to remove roofs and / or main doors from the rented houses in which the learners stay with their parents and / or guardians. Lack of good shelter can hinder learners from sitting down to read and write when they are at home.

It was also noted that some learners in the nation lacked adequate clothings. This is because most of their parents and / or guardians are strained financially to be able to buy four them basic clothing. Further, these parents and / or guardians were unable to buy sanitary towels for their girls and daughters. Lack of sanitary pads by girls made most of them “easy prey” for men who easily cheat them by giving them money to meet their basic needs like buying sanitary pads. This in turn put the girls at high risk of engaging in sex with such men hence making them prone to sexual violence, sexually transmitted diseases, early pregnancy, child abuse, among other risks.

4.6 OVERBURDENING OF PARENTS WITH EDUCATIONAL ROLES

The closure of schools and the presence of learners at home as a result of Covid–19 pandemic has imposed more burdens on the parents in Kenya by raising their family, financial, educational and parental responsibilities. Most parents are overburdened between balancing their regular daily jobs and / or their professional duties and emerging educational roles by facilitating the education of their children. World Bank said that the ‘*unique nature of Covid–19 pandemic has placed parents as the first-line responders for children’s survival, care and learning*’ (Devercelli, 2020). Parents have instantly been forced to learn and take over the role of being educators since children are currently learning from home. Many parents were unprepared for homeschooling and eLearning and are now struggling with making their children to sit down to study as well as helping their children with schoolwork if their schools provide it.

Most parents are finding it challenging to educate or support the education of their children because most of them have low educational levels and minimal resources. In addition to focusing on curriculum learning, parents are also tasked with the duty of allowing their children to learn through tasks done at home daily like cooking, care-giving, gardening, among others. Parents have a responsibility of interacting more intimately with their children during this period of Covid–19 pandemic in order to build stronger social relationships with their children, shape their characters, and show their support to their families during such difficult times (Ndhine, 2020; & Cluver et al, 2020). This is because thier children need care, affection, and support during this traumatizing time which has been necessitated by this Covid–19 pandemic.

4.7 PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Covid-19 has affected most people including learners both psychologically and emotionally (Miller, 2020). The prolonged closure of schools due to this pandemic has caused learners and their parents as well as their teachers to go through a lot of psychological challenges like stress, anxiety and trauma daily. Thus, this pandemic has brought about challenges and anxiety that learners, parents and teachers have never experienced before in relation to provision of childcare and management of eLearning while learners are not in their schools. For instance, self-isolation, curfew and lockdown which were brought about by as a result of Covid-19 pandemic have made their lives difficult. Most of them are worried about lack of proper nutrition, water and sanitation in their homes and their communities. They are distressed about their health and safety and of their loved ones. The level of anxiety has also risen due to inadequate and inconsistent information as well as lack of official communication from learning institutions and the Ministry of Education, for instance, when learning will resume, how Covid-19 guideline will be implemented in learning institutions, among others. The sudden implementation of eLearning without any training on how to use it has stressed many teachers, parents and students (Liyaganawardena, Williams, & Adams, 2013). This is because most of them are inexperienced and lack the finances needed to buy digital devices to facilitate eLearning.

The interruption of the teaching and learning processes due to Covid-19 further raised the anxiety, uncertainty and psychological trauma among learners, parents and teachers regarding the suspension of national examinations and other forms of summative evaluation. The Cabinet Secretary for Education Prof. Magoha confirmed this anxiety of parents and stakeholders over national examinations while addressing media briefs organized by Ministry of Health on 26th April, 2020. He said that Kenyan schools will remain closed until further notice following the directive by the government in measures purposed to control and prevent the spread of Covid-19. Several Kenyan students pursuing internal curricular in various institutions were left in limbo after cancellation of exams scheduled for May and June 2020 due to Covid-19 pandemic (Kariuki, 2020).

4.8 DIVERGENT / LACK OF eLEARNING SKILLS

Quite a number of learners, teachers, parents and institutions of learning were not adequately prepared and ready for eLearning amidst the abrupt change to this mode of learning brought about by Covid-19. This is because most of them did not have sufficient skills, knowledge, attitude nor devices to embrace eLearning. Also a number of learners, teachers and parents have an overall negative attitudes towards eLearning. It is also worth noting that there are significant differences among learners and teachers within one school and across schools in terms of digital access, digital literacies, access to software and content, and availability of supportive online communities. (Bozkurt et al, 2020). It is only the upscale private schools that were able to provide eLearning successfully. These schools used Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Moodle or Google Classroom and other learning platforms.

4.9 EXPOSURE TO CYBER CRIME

In order to mitigate the effects of closure of schools as a result of Covid-19, digital platforms were adopted by various governments to enable teachers to deliver blended or full online lessons to the learners. In many families in developing nations, learners are increasingly accessing online learning and assessment resources using devices owned by parents or older family members. Despite these life changing impact of technology in the education sector, it has also raised some security concerns. Cybersecurity attacks are now on the rise due to the incorporation of online learning in learning institutions. This implies that the shift to online learning is presenting various security threats to teachers, learners as well as their parents and carers. This is because all these parties have become more prone to cyber-attacks than ever before. Recent reports have shown a rise in cybercrime since the beginning of this Covid-19 pandemic. This has made cyber security a key concern for educators in the entire education sector globally.

Learners, teachers, parents and caregivers are presently getting exposed to different forms of cyber crimes as they use eLearning. For instance, the data of the users is hacked or leaked like in the case of Zoom (Davey, 2020). The safety and security of some virtual calls has become a matter of concern since they are hacked by ‘bombers’ who display rude or inappropriate messages (Manskar, 2020). Learners are also exposed to unworthy sites and materials like pornography, videos, clips, online criminal gang groups, among others. Most learners are not aware of privacy policies, agreements and terms or conditions of using or sharing personal information / content online. This exposes them to a great deal of online risks. For instance, deep and disturbing ethical and legal issues were reported in India in relation to sharing photos and information of students in online education classrooms (Sharma, 2020).

Learners (more so girls) also experience online gender based Violence and online hate. Online gender-based violences are as pervasive and destructive as offline violences. The prevalence of cyber violence cause its impact on girls and women to be serious. Cyber violence engenders feelings of shame, humiliation and isolation. It threatens the mental health of girls and women as well as their sense of safety. Females often respond by withdrawing from online spaces or limiting their online presence. Thus, cyberviolence infringes on the right of females to information, expression and learning. Hence, there is a serious need to suggest and adopt measures for preventing and protecting against it.

4.10 ABUSED CHILD LABOUR

Covid-19 pandemic has negatively affected most school going children by making them to engage in child labour related activities. For instance, Covid-19 pandemic has led to the initiation of school going girls into the care giving role. They have been forced to increase the

time they spend on handling domestic duties like laundry, grocery shopping, cleaning, cooking and taking care of kids (Medina & Lerer, 2020). Cases have been reported of many learners seeking manual jobs which they perform as cheap labourers. Such tasks include digging, harvesting sand from rivers, cutting trees, selling groceries in market places, and many others. This therefore implies that the longer these children stay out-of-school, the less likely they will return back to school since they are required to perform the routine household chores or labour which they have adapted to do (Bozkurt et al, 2020).

4.11 HEIGHTENING OF UNBECOMING BEHAVIOURS IN LEARNERS

During this Covid-19 pandemic period, majority of learners have been reported to learn and adapt different kinds of unethical hazardous behaviours which are unacceptable in the society. All these is happening because of the idleness among learners as a result of the prolonged closure of schools due to Covid-19 pandemic. For instance, many incidences of rising high rates of drugs and substance abuse among learners have been reported. These include heavy consumption of alcohol, smoking, taking of hard drugs like cocaine, among others. Further, many learners have ventured in sex related activities mostly with the aim of getting some money. As such many learners are engaging in accessing unwanted materials online such as watching pornographic videos and pictures. Home quarantines as a result of Covid-19 pandemic has led to a rise in incest cases in most families. It has been proved that protracted closure of school with restricted movements and acute challenges of limited space among poor households have exacerbated cases of exposure to pornographic materials, drug and substance abuse, increased rape, Gender Based Violence (GBV) including defilement of children (UNESCO, 2020b). Cases of indiscipline among learners are also on the rise. For example, quite a number of parents and / or Guardians have complained that they are unable to manage their children while they are home because most of them lack respect to their parents and the elderly. Some learners have also been enticed to join bad groups in the society such as criminal gang groups.

4.12 THEFT AND VANDALISM OF SCHOOL PROPERTY

Most school compounds have been deserted since the closure of institutions of learning in Kenya due to the eruption of Covid-19 pandemic. Pictures posted on social media platforms show the sorry state of schools with some classrooms invaded by anthills and school compounds being bushy and littered. The Ministry of Education is concerned that school properties have also been exposed to vandalism and theft as a result of the pro-longed absence of teachers and learners due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Media Team, 2020). This is because most learning institutions have been left unmanned in the day and night therefore exposing them to vandalism and theft. Again, some other schools were being used as Covid-19 isolation centres thereby exposing them to more risks of damage of school properties.

4.13 DEMOTIVATION OF TEACHERS ON TEMPORARY TERMS OF SERVICE

Most teachers who are employed by the Board of Management (BoM) of various schools and those employed in private schools are demoralized and demotivated. This is because they have never been paid their salaries since the Covid-19 pandemic begun. Case have been reported of some of these teachers committing suicide because they cannot meet their basic needs. Quite a number of BoM teachers and those from private schools lost their jobs and incomes as a result of this pandemic. This has resulted into increased economic dependence ratio and upsurge in the vulnerable groups. This therefore implies that majority of these teachers cannot render their services committedly to learners and the school at large.

4.14 STIGMATIZATION OF LEARNERS AFFECTED AND INFECTED BY COVID-19

It is likely that the learners who have been affected and / or infected with the Covid-19 disease will be discriminated with other members of the society as well as their colleagues back at school when schools resume. For instance, this discrimination might cause the learners who have or are affected by this deadly Covid-19 disease to be stigmatized. These learners become stigmatized when their close family members such as siblings, parents and / or guardians get infected with the Covid-19 disease and some even die as a result of the disease. Learners also become stigmatized when their colleagues at school, friends, and other members of the society either mock or discriminate them together with their family members for contracting the Covid-19 disease. Further, the learners who have or are infected with Covid-19 disease will really also be traumatized.

5. SUGGESTIONS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES TO THE CHALLENGES FACING BASIC EDUCATION DURING AND AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD

Various nations globally observed and adhered to strict protocols to lower the chances of people infecting each other with the disease. Some of those international and national guidelines include implementing social distancing regulations, quarantines, self-isolations, curfews and complete or partial lockdown. Several nations also imposed travelling bans for passangers into and from their borders be it via air, land or water. Most nations only allowed movement of cargo into and out of their territories using ships, vehicles and aeroplanes.

To curb the spread of Covid-19 in the nation, the government of the Republic of Kenya implemented a number of protective and precautionary measures through the Ministry of Health. This was aimed at countering the impact of the virus on the Kenyan population. Some of those measures included creating Covid-19 awareness toll lines, contacts tracking, isolation, and constitution of the National Emergency Response Committee on Corona Virus. The government imposed curfew in the whole republic between 7pm to 5am which was later modified to begin at 10:00pm upto 4:00am countrywide. This national curfew was extended to January 8, 2021. All rars were to close daily by 9:00pm sharp. Restaurants and hotels that do not comply with Covid-19 guidelines will be closed and their licences revoked. Churches and Mosques were required to

hold not more than one third of the hall. The counties that reported high case like Nairobi, Mombasa, Kilifi and Garissa Counties were locked down. There was also a 14 day quarantine for overseas travellers and those who come into contact with the infected people.

Social distancing, wearing masks in public places, working from home more so for state officers aged 58 years and above, working in shifts, and compulsory unpaid leaves by some privately owned companies or organizations were also adopted. Mass testing was done in densely populated regions with high confirmed cases of Covid-19. Moreover, all political gatherings and rallies were suspended and anyone holding such meetings were to hold them in halls. A special enforcement team which was made up of National Government Security Team was instituted. Counties or specific areas with upsurge of Covid-19 cases will be locked down by County Governments and Administrators. Additionally, the Ministry of Health set policy priority that aims at reducing the burden of communicable disease including the outbreak of Covid-19. The government of Kenya firmly affirmed that no services will be offered to anyone who do not abide by the Covid-19 protocols. The government formulated the motto: "...*Bila Barakoa.... Hakuna Huduma...*" (meaning without face mask, there is no service).

In relation to education, the government of Kenya closed all institutions of learning like universities, colleges and schools abruptly between 16th and 20th March, 2020 as a result of the outbreak of Covid-19 disease. (Nation Media Newsplex Team, April 29th, 2020). However, a number of challenges (some of which are stated above in this article) emerged due to Covid-19 pandemic. These challenges reflect the social injustice, inequity and the digital divide that have been exacerbated on learners at the basic level of education during this Covid-19 crisis. These challenges need unique and target driven measures if they are to be addressed. Thus, the investment of resources should not just target a stop gap measure, but rather focus on a systemic change in education (Selvam, 2020). The following sub-sections briefly describe some of the suggestions that can be adopted in order to address some of the challenges stated above which are faced basic education due to the eruption of Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya. This will be achieved by addressing the fourth objective of this study which focused on suggesting possible interventions to enhance basic education during and after the Covid-19 pandemic period in Kenya.

5.1 BUILDING A COMMUNITY THAT SUPPORTS EDUCATION

Very many parents, learners, teachers and the entire society at large are psychologically overwhelmed by the things that are happening during this pacloseds period particularly in relation to the education of learners (Waddingham, 2020). The former Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State in South Africa said that "*Our biggest mistake would be to treat children as cognitive machines that can simply be switched on again after the trauma of Covid-*

19” (Jansen, 2020). The survival of the education of learners during this period needs supportive people in the society who can willingly share knowledge and skills with learners. For example, some educational and technology companies like Google which offer services for profit availed some of their services for free to learners to support eLearning (Williamson, Eynon & Potter, 2020). In Kenya, the government wanted to introduce community based learning (CBL) as a means of engaging learners during this period when schools were closed due to Covid 19 pandemic. This was to enable learners to continue remaining in an academic mood as they wait for official reopening of learning institutions countrywide. It was to be achieved by using teachers living in a given community to engage learners in that community by offering learning at no cost. It adapted / used a framework similar to the "*nyumba kumi initiative*" where a teacher was to manage at least 15 learners.

However, this program did not kick off due to some technical issues and the fear of further spreading of Covid-19. The programme was to be coordinated jointly with the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Health (MoH), Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government. The MoE and TSC were play the critical role of coordinating, monitoring and supervising the implementation of the programme to ensure that teachers are doing the right thing. The MoH was to train teachers on strict observance of MoH guidelines and protocols by learners such as social distancing, face masks, etc to contain the spread of Covid-19. The Ministry of Interior (in collaboration with chiefs and the "*nyumba kumi initiative*") was to ensure that all learner within their jurisdiction participate in the CBL programme. In relation to this programme, the TSC issued guidelines for implementation of community based learning programme through the Circular Number 8/2020.

The circular asked teachers employed by the Commission to register with Curriculum Support Officers in the Zones and Sub-County where they currently stay to offer CBL. Teachers were to use a curriculum produced by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) to plan for CBL. The CBL was not a formal programme for covering the syllabus. It was an activity based programme for engaging learners in daily activities like life skills, environmental education, values, numeracy, literacy, health, fitness and physical activities like weeding, cultivating, grazing animals, story telling, planting, hygiene, debating life issues, among other depending on their age, class and level of education. Teachers were to offer psychosocial support / guidance and counselling to learners to help them fit in the society since they are facing several challenges such as teenage pregnancy, loss of parents through death, sickness, sexual abuse, learners becoming gangster, and many more other challenges.

5.2 DIDACTICS OF LOVE, CARE, AFFECTIONAND EMPATHY

A lot of anxiety, uncertainty and trauma is being experienced by learners, teachers and parents during this period of Covid-19. Hence there is need to take care of each other to make each other feel that nobody is left alone during these traumatic period of Covid-19, and especially learners. The theme of a pedagogy of care has surfaced within educational institutions. A supportive conducive environment must be cultivated among learners in order to address the trauma brought about by Covid-19 via enhancing the spirit of love, care, affection, empathy, support, compassion and inclusion in institutions of learning after Covid-19 (Bali, 2020a). This caring approach will ensure that the individual needs of the vulnerable learners are addressed. Due to the devastating impact of this pandemic, the pedagogy of love, care, empathy and psychological / emotional support should not only be limited to learners in the classroom but it should as well be incorporated in all educational policy (Bali, 2020a). In addition to the educational roles of learning institutions, this pandemic has shown the invisible roles played by these institutions in the society such as providing feeding programmes, establishing socio-emotional support structures and community counselling services, and shelter when situations at home are difficult (Bozkurt et al, 2020).

5.3 STRENGTHENING OF eLEARNING AND ONLINE INFRASTRUCTURE

The government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education should strengthen the already existing digital infrastructure as well as eLearning platforms and programs for learners in the country. This will facilitate teaching and learning during and after this Covid-19 pandemic period when children are at home by enhancing curriculum delivery through different media platforms like Radio, Television, Kenya Education Cloud, Zoom, YouTube, among others. School going children can access the developed online content through various channels to ensure uninterrupted learning for learners in the country while they are at home. These channels have proved to be alternative modes of learning in the absence of real classroom learning. This is because they have led to continuous production of programs and continuous circulation of content so as to provide access to quality content at all levels of basic education in Kenya. The Kenya Education Cloud hosts:- interactive digital content, radio lessons on demand, textbooks to serve learners and teachers at all levels, and online courses for teachers on curriculum implementation and use integration of information technology in learning (MoE Sessional Paper, 2018). However, it is riddled with a lot of challenges (Ministry of Education, 2020).

The Ministry of Education in conjunction with the county governments should come up with modernities of using local FM radio stations in the county to enhance eLearning within county. The Ministry of Education should engage teachers in various subjects to teach the learners in primary and secondary schools in their counties by airing their lessons through these local radio stations. This is because quite a good number of learners in these counties have access to these radio stations in their homes. Also, many parents and learners in these counties listen these radio stations.

5.4 ADOPTION OF SELF DIRECTED LEARNING

Self-directed learning is now the new norm which should be adopted in Kenya. Covid-19 has not only challenged learners, educators, parents and researchers but it has offered also opportunities for self-learning (Selvam, 2020). Educators must engage guardians, parents and the entire society at large to facilitate a smooth transition from face to face learning to home schooling through eLearning. With these shift in education, Selvam (2020) emphasizes that education has to move from mere learning to learning to know; from imparting information to information literacy; from being content-centered to be methodology focused. Learners should develop time management and self-directed learning habits as they are not quite familiar with online learning environments. Learners must also become self-directed learners since the internet provides great opportunities for learning. Learners must have the temperament that cannot stop them from adapting to new and old tools of technology. They must also have **collaboration** as one of their primary 21st century skills since without such skills, learners cannot collaborate with the teachers and they will not also learn the desired skills. Learners must take initiatives to handle their technological limitations and should understand how they can integrate the technological advancements to their career communication. Learners must realise how they can leverage the technological developments around them in relation to their career plans since they may not be able to get jobs in future if they do not interact well with technology now. They must prepare for the future world and not the present world.

5.5 STRICT OBSERVANCE OF MINISTRY OF HEALTH PROTOCOLS IN SCHOOLS

Improvement on Water and Sanitation Infrastructure

All institutions of learning in Kenya should improve water and sanitation infrastructure as directed by the Ministry of Health through the Ministry of Education. Information related to health and hygiene practices should be disseminated to learners in schools to avert the possibility of infections arising from infectious diseases like Covid-19. Myths on this infirmity should be debunk and rely on scientific information provided by the Ministry of Health and World Health Organization. Some of the protocols that should be observed include:- fumigating schools that were used as quarantine and / or isolation centres, providing hand washing detergents and sanitizers; giving masks; introducing school-based health programs; and observing social distancing in schools. Developing messages which can be understood easily by learners on pamphlets, posters and fliers. School cooks should be trained on food hygiene, sanitation and safe food preparation to curb the spread of Covid-19 pandemics and related ailments. School health policies that will guide sanitation and hygiene practices during crisis like Covid-19 pandemics should be designed and implemented by education stakeholders (MoE, 2020).

5.6 PROVIDING FREE OR SUBSIDIZED INTERNET CONNECTIVITY IN THE COUNTY

Learning institutions should lobby for free or subsidized internet bundles from service providers. Policy makers should reduce tax levies in order to offer affordable and reliable internet

connections for educators and learners off learning institutions. To this end, the Ministries of Education are working with providers of telecommunication service to zero-rate educational content on websites. This aims at removing or reducing the barrier of cost of data bundles. County governments should consider setting aside some money to use to install a strong internet connectivity in their county. This can be done best by installing free WiFi because it does not use very many connection cables. The county governments in conjunction with the Ministry of Education should come up with a program or a site that will enable learners to access educational related materials and resources for free when they log into the site using the free WiFi for internet connectivity. The internet connectivity should be locked or set in a way that will block learners from accessing unwanted sites like pornographic sites when using the free WiFi. Learners can also use the free WiFi to learn online through platforms like webinar and zoom. The Ministry of education should come up with a timetable that reflects the time, day and period located for each subject both in primary and secondary schools to engage the learners in the county through being taught by various teachers.

5.7 ENHANCING DIGITAL LITERACY

In the wake of contemporary issues like Covid-19 and other related disasters, there is a serious need for capacity building on the use of digital tools among learners, teachers and parents. Educational institutions should fill the gaps in digital literacy, information literacy, online education and open licensing for all educators at all levels of education (Bozkurt et al, 2020). This will boost confidence and motivate educators and learners. The government of Kenya in collaboration with UNESCO need to come up with appropriate policy frameworks for the education sector to help bridge the gap between “*technologically proficient and technologically deficient*”. This calls for adoption of a skill-based curriculum in learning institutions which is currently lacking. Institutions should therefore take advantage of the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic to scale up their curriculum to suit such needs. This is because many traditional jobs will become obsolete in Kenya as most employers in big and medium level companies will now be demanding for intellectual agility from graduates as machines become more practical.

Teachers need to change their negative attitude towards eLearning and wake up to the new reality of adapting eLearning as a new method of teaching and learning. Teachers, parents and learners should be given assistance on the use of digital tools. This can be achieved through the Ministry of Education organizing brief orientation workshops or trainings for educators and parents in order to enhance monitoring of learners when they are online. Teachers and parents should know all the basic settings of internet connectivity to enable them to facilitate the eLearning of learners. These basic internet skills will also enable teachers to offer live streaming of lessons.

5.8 PROVISION OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND COUNSELING TO LEARNERS

Learners faced very many challenges and problems when they were at home as a result of Covid-19 pandemic. Hence there is a serious need of these learners to be given psychosocial support when they report back to school when schools reopen. Ministry of Education should liaise with Ministry of Health should offer mentorship programs and psychosocial counseling services to learners affected and infected by Covid-19. The other psychologically and socially affected members of the school s community who need psychosocial support as a result of the various issues they went through during the protracted schools closure Covid-19 period include the victims of Gender Based Violence (GBV), teen pregnancies victims, drug abusers, pornographic addicts, among others. The Ministry of Education should develop content on COVID-19 psychological support awareness and safety measures to disseminate to institutions for use. Strengthening of guidance and counseling departments and programmes in schools through building the capacity of teachers in life skills, guiding and counseling to efficiently respond to variations in social behavior will too be significant (Areba, 2020).

Further, the Ministry of Education should enhance collaboration with Department of Children Services to promote safety and protection of children to increase awareness of reporting protocols for incidences of child abuse and neglect. The Ministry of Education should scale up its assistance to vulnerable and marginalized learners due to the economic backlash caused by Covid-19 and mostly to the learners from these bracket. For instance, the Ministry of Education should liaise with the Department of Social Protection to provide additional assistance like cash transfer to orphans and vulnerable learners for sustainability to ensure that they continue to stay in school by avoiding dropping out of schools for lack of funds and support. The government through the Ministry of Education should prepare a post Covid-19 crisis education budgets to cushion the affected learners to recover from the unexpected virus economic shocks.

5.9 OFFERING TUITION AND REMEDIAL INTERVENTIONS TO LEARNERS

Both parents and teachers are greatly concerned that the sudden closure of institutions of learning in Kenya led to the ineffective learning of learners even with the introduction of the digital mitigation measures which were instituted by the Ministry of Education. Most learners never had a personal inner drive to study on their own during this Covid-19 period when they were at home. This was further necessitated by the inability of most children to access eLearning resource due to reasons like lack of power and internet connectivity in remote areas. Most learners were also even unable to access eLearning devices (like Smartphones and laptops). ELearning system was preferred by the Ministry as a way of ensuring that education does not sink during this Covid-19 pandemic period. Due to these challenges, the less privileged learners will be far behind academically compared to their peers who are more privileged. As such, there is such a serious need to conduct an in depth examination when schools will reopen in order to know the gaps in the academic abilities of learners. Thus will enable teachers to identify how they will give learners extra tuition by organizing for remedial programmings. This will enable the less privileged learners to catch up with their colleagues speedily.

5.10 NEED FOR OPENNESS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

The interruption of education by the Covid–19 pandemic signifies the importance of the need of openness in education in order to address the above highlighted issues and many others which should be taken into consideration. Some of these issues include using alternative assessment and evaluation methods as well as concerns about surveillance, ethics, and data privacy resulting from nearly exclusive dependency on online solutions. Further, the Ministry of Education should coordinate all the stakeholder in the education sector to assist it in formulating quick intervention strategies which can be used to respond to the challenges pause by Covid–19 pandemic in institutions of learning.

5.11 DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Policymakers should develop a comprehensive policy framework and action strategies for the education sector. The policies should be implemented swiftly during such similar crisis and disasters at both the national and local levels of education. Otherwise, there would be confusion and delay in decision-making at institutional and personal levels (Bozkurt et al, 2020). For instance, the government should formulate and implement very stringent measures to curb the cases of pregnancies among school girls. Such strict rules should be implemented through the office of the chiefs and sub-chiefs to address the escalating issue of early early pregnancies and early marriages among school girls. Also, all pregnant school girls should be tracked to minimize on cases of school dropout.

CONCLUSION

As a scholar, I feel that Covid–19 pandemic has thrust the education sector in Kenya forcefully. Although usage of eLearning cannot holistically replace face to face teaching and learning methodology (Monash University, 2020) it is worth for the education sector in Kenya to consider investing resources in eLearning. Online learning is a must in the 21st century especially when responding to critical global crisis like Covid–19. Institutions of learning in collaboration with other stakeholders like UNESCO should do more in order to reduce effectively the gap between the technologically enabled and the technologically disabled learners and educators during such hard times. In conclusion, the government of Kenya and the entire society at large should support the education sector to ensure a smooth transition between face to face traditional mode to a more blended mode of learning engagement since change is indeed a process.

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