

**TRENDING ISSUES IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA DURING COVID-19  
PANDEMIC ERA: THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS**

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**Abstract**

*The Nigerian education sector is a crucial factor for sustainable national development in the country. It is an important instrument by which countries of the world undergo rapid socio-economic, cultural, religious, political and environmental reforms. Given the role of the Nigerian education sector towards development of people and the society which cannot be overemphasized; it is however important that efforts are channeled by stakeholders towards effective management of the Nigerian education sector during the COVID-19 pandemic era. The pandemic era is a time when the world is witnessing the Coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic. The Coronavirus pandemic has caused humanity so much deaths, putting a halt to socio-economic activities in various countries and traumatizing people to continue living in fear and worries about the sustainability of humanity and their environment. This situation which seem to affect educational management globally, requires urgent attention of all education stakeholders to proffer solutions towards effective management of the Nigerian education sector. This paper therefore, discussed the trending issues surrounding educational management in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic era; specifically looking at the role of education stakeholders towards effective management of the Nigerian education sector. Few concepts such as educational management, the pandemic period - its history and impacts, education stakeholders and Nigerian education sector, were described in the paper. Further discussed in this paper was the trending issues affecting educational management in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic era. The role of stakeholders in management of the Nigerian education sector during the COVID-19 pandemic era were also discussed in the paper.*

**Key Words:** *Trending Issues, Educational Management, Education Sector, COVID-19, Pandemic Era, Role, Stakeholders*

**Introduction**

The Nigerian education system is generally an instrument for sustainable development. It is an “instrument par excellence” for social and economic reconstruction of the nation as indicted by The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) in the National Policy on Education (NPE). Education, has also been described as a crucial factor for socio-economic, cultural, political, religious and environmental development. Education is a necessity for every individual in a country and likewise an aggregate tool for developing and empowering the human resources and capacities for nation-building in Nigeria. Education therefore, is equally one of the major instruments for public enlightenment and emancipation. An important means towards ending illiteracy, ignorance, hunger and starvation, poverty and both common and deadly diseases. The Nigerian education system which incorporates the Early Childhood, Care and Development Education (ECCDE), Primary/Basic education, Secondary or Post-Basic education, Technical education and Tertiary or higher education, is equally a process by which the development of a competent workforce and human capacities capable of making contributive efforts towards national development in the country are developed and made possible. Without the various education systems in the education sector, citizens of different countries and Nigeria inclusive, will keep on living in the dark. Education therefore, is a varietal instrument for nation-building, social change and national transformation in every society. The Nigerian education sector is an important factor towards meeting the goals

of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Education For All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2014). Thus, the goals and objectives of the Nigerian education sector and system as further indicated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) by the FRN (2014, p.2) are the; development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen; total integration of the individual into the immediate community, the Nigerian society and the world; provision of equal access to qualitative educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education, within and outside the formal school system; inculcation of the national consciousness, values and national unity; and development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society. However, achievement of the above goals demands that educational management and delivery at the various levels of the Nigerian education sector and systems especially during the COVID-19 pandemic era remains functional in order to ensure and sustain unfettered access and equity to education for the total development of the individual; ensure that quality education delivery is highly provided and maintained at all levels; promote functional education for skill acquisition, job creation and poverty reduction; ensure periodic review, effectiveness and relevance of the curriculum at all levels to meet the needs of the society and the world of work; collaborate with development partners, the private sector, NGOs and local communities to support and fund education; and promote information and technology capability at all levels of the Nigerian education sector in order to face the challenges and difficulties brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic era. To achieve the goals and objectives of the Nigerian education sector during the COVID-19 pandemic era cannot be actualized without effective educational management by the different stakeholders.

Educational Management (EM) as described within the context of this paper entails effective planning, organizing, coordinating and control of human and material resources of the education system and institutions in order to achieve educational goals and objectives. Besides, the stakeholders of the Nigerian education system as described also in the paper includes such personnel as the government, policy makers, administrators, school heads, curriculum developers and experts, supervisors and inspectors, teaching and non-teaching staff, students, parents and community members, among others, who are involved in the smooth operations, daily activities and management of the education system. Such people make their contributions towards the growth and development of the education system. Notwithstanding the importance of the Nigerian education sector, yet all the system's operations and educational management at all levels in the educational sector were highly hindered and constrained by the Coronavirus pandemic which has caused damage to the world globally. According to the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), the COVID-19 pandemic era had a great hit on the management of the education sector globally. The pandemic affected education, for more than 91% of students worldwide, with approximately 1.6 billion children and youngsters were unable to attend physical schools due to temporary closures and lockdowns (UNESCO, 2020). Mustafa (2020) opined that efforts to stem the spread of COVID-19 pandemic through non-pharmaceutical interventions and preventive measures such as social-distancing and self-isolation prompted the widespread closure of primary, secondary and tertiary schooling in over 100 countries including Nigeria. A pandemic however, is an outbreak of epidemic disease which can easily be transmitted or spread to a large population of people within shortest period of time. The Coronavirus pandemic which was witnessed recently, caused humanity so much deaths, putting a halt to a lot of socio-economic activities including the education sector in many countries all over the continents. People all over the world during this pandemic period are being traumatized to continue living in fear and worries about the sustainability of humanity and their environment. During the COVID-19 pandemic era, all the activities in the Nigerian education sector in the lower and upper stream, that is, ECCDE, primary, basic, secondary and tertiary institutions were put to a halt owing to the pandemic period. Students all over in various educational institutions were away from school for many months, making the education system to loss some academic sessions. This situation which seem to affect educational management all over the country and globally, required urgent attention of stakeholders to proffer solutions towards effective management of the Nigerian education system in order to curb the situation. And failure salvage the situation of things as it is presently in the Nigerian

education system, this could cause a lot of damages and harm to human learning than what the Coronavirus pandemic has already done. This is so because, no society can survive without education. Education plays a key role on transformation and development of people and their society. It is an important tool for man's survival and liberation in their society. It is through education that researches about the problems and challenges affecting the sustainability of humanity are conducted and solutions proffered. Therefore, for countries throughout the world including Nigeria to triumph over Coronavirus pandemic era, the contributions of the different education stakeholders coupled with effective educational management of the education sector are requisite. The situation of the COVID-19 pandemic era also warrants that all hands are on deck, all education stakeholders must play important roles in order to salvage the situation of things in the country and likewise save the education system from wreck. The thrust of this paper therefore was to examine the trending issues in educational management during the pandemic period and the stakeholders' roles towards effective management of the Nigerian education sector. Issues concerning the thrust of this paper have been discussed and disclosed under different sections and subheading. However, several key terms have been described in the proceeding section.

### **Educational Management (EM)**

Educational Management (EM) as described by Akpakwu (2012) involves the process of coordinating, utilization and harnessing the human and material resources in the education sector in order to achieve educational goals and objectives. It equally implies the application of the principals and practices of management in educational sector and institutions for achievement of education goals. Management on the other hand as defined by Riaz (2016) includes all those people who are concerned with managing an organization. It is a sum of organized activities by a group of people. Other definitions of management provided by Riaz includes that management is the art of getting things done through and with the people in formally organized groups. It is the process of decision making and control over the action of human beings for the express purpose of attaining pre-determined education goals. Educational Management (EM) is a distinct process consisting of planning, organizing, activating and controlling to determine and accomplish educational objectives by the use of people and resources. It is further the controlling of a complex organization like education, so as to achieve desired goals resulted. EM is the act or art of managing, the conducting or supervising the education systems for achievement of the general goals and objectives of education sector (Engwall, Kipping & Üsdiken, 2015). Therefore, the functions of management in education involves planning, coordinating, controlling, recording and reporting, directing and staffing. All the management functions when effectively applied will lead to effective management of the education sector for achievement of educational goals and objectives especially during the COVID-19 pandemic era which presents a lot of challenges to effective educational management. According to Ameen (2019), effectiveness in educational management refers to the capability of the management to achieve the desired targets in the specified time. It is concerned with doing what is right or what should be done during and after the COVID-19 pandemic era. Educational Management (EM) during the COVID-19 pandemic era therefore, simply involves strategic planning, coordination and utilization of both the human and material resources in order to achieve educational goals and objectives. Hence, the discussions on the pandemic era below.

### **Pandemic Era: Description, History and its Negative Impacts**

The World Health Organization's (WHO, 2011a) standard definition of pandemic period refers to a situation in which a new and highly pathogenic viral subtype, one to which no one (or few) in the human population has immunological resistance and which is easily transmissible between humans, establishes a foothold in the human population, at which point it rapidly spreads worldwide (WHO, 2011a). According to Morens, Folkers and Fauc (2009), the term pandemic era refers to diseases that extend over large geographic areas, for example, the 14th-century plague (the Black Death), cholera, influenza and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/AIDS. In addition to geographic extension, the term pandemic imply disease movement or spread via transmission that can be traced from place to place, as has been done historically for centuries (example, the Black Death). Recently, the Coronavirus also known as COVID-19 which started in China in the year 2019, was been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2011a). It is an epidemic because it

crossed the boundaries of various countries, causing a lot of deaths, harm and disturbances to the humans and socio-economic activities in the society. History has it that there have been in the past other pandemics in the society and this have been disclosed by few scholars. Qiu, Rutherford, Mao and Chu (2017) opined that there have been quite a number of significant pandemics recorded in human history, including smallpox and cholera plague, dengue, HIV/AIDS, influenza, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), West Nile disease and tuberculosis. Influenza pandemics are unpredictable but recurring events that can have severe consequences on societies worldwide. Influenza pandemics have struck about three times every century since the 1500s, or roughly every 10-50 years. In the 20th century, there were 3 influenza pandemics which were named: “Spanish flu” in 1918-1919, “Asian flu” in 1957-1958 and the “Hong Kong flu” in 1968-1969. Each pandemic harmed human life and economic development. For example, the influenza pandemic of 1918-1919, which killed more than 20 million people in the world and has been cited as the most devastating epidemic in recorded world history (WHO, 2011b). Recent years have seen at least six large-scale outbreaks—hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, severe acute respiratory syndrome, H5N1 influenza, H1N1 influenza, Middle East respiratory syndrome, and Ebola virus disease epidemic (Qiu, Rutherford, Mao & Chu, 2017). The influenza H1N1 2009 virus (A/2009/H1N1) was the first pandemic influenza of the 21st century. This affected the whole world and caused more than 18,000 deaths. The Ebola disease killed more than 11,000 people and cost the world more than USD \$2 billion, according to World Bank calculations (Maurice, 2016). In 2016, the Zika virus continued to spread and consequently threatened the health of people in 34 countries (Troncoso, 2016 cited in Qiu, Rutherford, Mao & Chu, 2017). These outbreaks make different scientists and governments worry about a repeat of the devastation of the Spanish flu of 1918 (Lin, McCloud, Bigman & Viswanath, 2016 cited in Qiu, Rutherford, Mao & Chu, 2017). Given the history of these pandemics, still there is a repeat of reoccurrence of the pandemic with the Coronavirus pandemic since December, 2019 which has had negative impact and consequences on human activities and their existence including the educational sector and management not only in the Nigerian society but across various regions throughout the world.

#### ***Negative Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic:***

Most scholars and organizations such as Morens, Folkers and Fauc (2009), Qiu, Rutherford, Mao and Chu (2017), the World Health Organization and others have indicated the negative impacts and consequences of the pandemics on human existence and socio-economic activities causing hitches towards the national economy and national development. According to Qiu, Rutherford, Mao and Chu (2017), WHO (2011a) and Verikios, Sullivan, Stojanovski, Giesecke and Woo (2015), infectious diseases or viruses’ outbreaks can easily cross borders to threaten educational, economic and regional stability, as has been demonstrated by COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond the debilitating, sometimes fatal, consequences for those directly affected, COVID-19 pandemic have a wide range of negative social, economic and political consequences (Davies, 2013). COVID-19 pandemic event threatens all aspects of the educational, economic and social fabric (Drake, Chalabi, & Coker, 2012 cited in Qiu, Rutherford, Mao & Chu, 2017; Nabarro & Wannous, 2016 cited in Qiu, Rutherford, Mao & Chu, 2017). Health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have infected millions of people, causing widespread serious illness in a large population and thousands of deaths (Landis, 2007; Wildoner, 2016). Infectious disease disasters, including the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging infectious disease outbreaks, have the potential to cause high morbidity and mortality in the world, and in fact, they may account for a quarter to a third of global mortality. In both European and developing countries like Nigeria, both COVID-19 pandemic and other infectious diseases have the potential to kill and claim many people’s lives, and the likelihood of deaths is within the range of 5 to 10 percent (Kern, 2016; Wong & Leung, 2007; Su & He, 2015; Fangriya, 2015 cited in Qiu, Rutherford, Mao & Chu, 2017; Nabarro & Wannous, 2016). The negative economic impacts of the previous pandemics which are similar with the COVID-19 virus as further observed by Qiu, Rutherford, Mao and Chu (2017), represented a serious threat not only to the population of the world, but also to its economy. The impact of economic loss resulted in instability of the economy. The impact is through direct costs, long term burden, and indirect costs. The direct costs of dealing with the disease outbreak can be very high. For example, the Ebola outbreak has seriously undermined the economics throughout West Africa. The Ebola

outbreak in Sierra Leone in 2015 cost USD 6 billion in direct costs (hospitals, staff, medication), and the direct costs alone amount to 3 years of funding for WHO, and are well over 20 times the cost of WHO's emergency response cuts in its 2014–15 budget (Qiu, Rutherford, Mao & Chu, 2017). It has been calculated that there was an economic loss of USD 1.6 billion for the three countries compared with the economic growth in the previous year 2014 (Kern, 2016). The Global Health Risk Framework for the Future (GHRF) Commission estimates that every year on average infectious disease outbreaks cost the world about USD 60 billion in direct costs (Maurice, 2016). The long term burden is also severe. One of the main burdens is from the loss of earnings of those who have died. Qiu, Rutherford, Mao and Chu (2017) have estimated that economic losses from a pandemic influenza in the USA was USD 90–220 billion, and of that, 80% would come from the value of expected future lifetime earnings of those who would die. Qiu, Rutherford, Mao and Chu estimated further that the economic cost of an influenza pandemic range from USD 374 billion for a mild pandemic to USD 7.3 trillion for a severe pandemic. The mathematical models indicate that a future influenza pandemic could have total costs USD 71–166 (Qiu, Rutherford, Mao & Chu, 2017). Recent years have seen at least six large-scale outbreaks—hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, severe acute respiratory syndrome, H5N1 influenza, H1N1 influenza, Middle East respiratory syndrome, and Ebola virus disease, which cost the world more than \$2 billion, according to World Bank calculations (Maurice, 2016). Indirect costs are also very heavy. They include everything that contributes to a decline in GDP. The example of SARS, especially its impacts on the region affected the 2003 annual GDP of China decreased by 1% and the GDP of Southeast Asia also declined by 0.5% (Qiu, Rutherford, Mao & Chu, 2017). Thus, pandemics have both immediate and long-term effects that can damage the economic life of a nation for many years to come.

Pandemics like the COVID-19 pandemic also have social impacts which could be severe to include restriction on local and international travels, schools closure, initiation of strict curfews, stoppage of markets and sports activities. All these are a likely reality should a pandemic with true potential for high morbidity and mortality emerge. Population mobility is also a key factor. Movement was difficult and the travel including visiting families, carrying goods to markets were restricted by military check points during the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of airports and cancellation of flights affected many people's travel, livelihood, education and family life. Internationalization of education in most countries become difficult because many people were afraid of travelling to European countries for their education. With the rapid development in worldwide aviation over the last two decades, the risk of global COVID-19 pandemic has escalated with increased passenger traffic (Wong & Leung, 2007 cited in Qiu, Rutherford, Mao & Chu, 2017). Closing the airports harmed the economy of the affected regions. School closure is often considered the first non-pharmaceutical intervention for implementation in a pandemic, as students were effective in spreading the virus. Timely school closure and cancellation of public gatherings was significantly associated with reduced mortality. School closure also raises a range of ethical and social issues, particularly since families from underprivileged backgrounds are likely to be disproportionately affected by the intervention (Chen, Huang, Chuang, Chiu, & Kuo, 2011; Qiu, Rutherford, Mao & Chu, 2017). Additionally, pandemics just like the recent Coronavirus pandemic poses a lot of security threats. Global security is threatened from pandemics, in terms of lives and economic stability (Maurice, 2016). Pandemics are no longer simply the domain of public health and clinical medicine, but are a social issue, a development issue, and a global security issue (Qiu, Rutherford, Mao & Chu, 2017). It was recently witnessed that during the coronavirus pandemic lockdown in Nigeria, there were a lot of security threats in form of female sexual harassment – precisely rape cases, murder, kidnapping, civil unrest, police and army brutally attacking the public for breaching curfews, active armed conflicts, political crisis, herdsmen disruption, robbery and theft cases were reported because of the hardship inflicted by the pandemic. Pandemic prevention and response, therefore, should be treated as an essential tenet of both national and global security –not just as a matter of health (Kern, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic have equally had negative impacts on the education sector and management by putting a halt to academic activities, drawing the academic calendar and sessions backwards. For instance, the Coronavirus pandemic affected schooling since its outbreak. Children and students in the various educational institutions were at home because of the pandemic. Physical

classes and communication (except for the on-line teaching) which takes place in the classroom between the teachers and students were put on hold because of the pandemic. UNESCO (2020) observed that previous outbreaks of infectious diseases have prompted widespread school closings around the world, with varying levels of effectiveness. The COVID-19 pandemic as well, affected the management of educational systems worldwide, leading to the near-total closures of schools, universities and colleges. Even, educational funding during the COVID-19 era was poor and low because all attention was focused on the health sector. This event had serious implication on future funding of education sector and management by the Nigerian government who paid less positive attitude and concern towards the education system in the country. Ladipo and Adebiori (2020) asserted that the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has no doubt adversely affected the global economy including all education sectors and systems. It forced many educational institutions to temporarily shut down and governments across the world to place a restriction on movement while exempting providers of essential services who were to strictly observe social distancing rules and provided services as a way to contain the spread of the virus. Unfortunately, the educational sector was also part of the receiving end affected, as a result of school closures and restriction of movements. Governments around the world closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. As of March and 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020, approximately 1.725 billion learners representing about 99.9% of the world's student population were affected due to school closures in response to the pandemic. According to UNICEF monitoring, 134 countries implemented nationwide closures and 38 implemented local closures, impacting about 98.5 percent of the world's student population.

On 23 March 2020, Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) released a statement announcing the cancellation of Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge O Level, Cambridge International AS & A Level, Cambridge AICE Diploma, and Cambridge Pre-U examinations for the May/June 2020 series across all countries. International Baccalaureate exams were also cancelled. In addition, Advanced Placement Exams, SAT administrations, and ACT administrations were moved online and cancelled. School closures impact not only students, teachers, and families, but have far-reaching economic and societal consequences. School closures in response to the pandemic have shed light on various social and economic issues, including student debt, digital learning, food insecurity, and homelessness, as well as access to childcare, health care, housing, internet and disability services. The impact has been felt 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. In response to school closures, UNESCO recommended the use of distance learning programmes and open educational applications and platforms that schools and teachers would use to reach out to learners remotely and limit the disruption of education (UNESCO, 2020). The Honourable Minister of Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu announced the closure of all schools in Nigeria in March, 2020 for students' safety from the virus until further effective guidelines were been drafted and provided for schools' reopening and resumption (Adamu, 2020). Given the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational activities and developments, the period warranted that all education stakeholders play important roles in order to salvage situation of things as it affected the management of Nigerian education sector and system in all ramification.

### **Nigerian Education Stakeholders**

The term stakeholders in education as described by the Great Schools Partnership (2014) typically refers to anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, city councilors, and state representatives. Stakeholders may also be collective entities, such as local businesses, organizations, advocacy groups, committees, media outlets and cultural institutions, in addition to organizations that represent specific groups, such as teachers' unions, the parent-teacher association/organizations and associations representing superintendents, principals, school boards, or teachers in specific academic disciplines (example, the National Council of Teachers of English or the Vermont Council of Teachers of Mathematics). In a word, stakeholders have a "stake" in the school and its students, meaning that they have personal, professional, civic, or financial interest or concern. In other cases,

stakeholders are individuals who have power or influence in a community, and schools may be obligated, by law or social expectation, to keep certain parties informed about the school and involved in its governance (Great Schools Partnership, 2014). Stakeholders, according to McGrath and Whitty (2017), Paine and McCann (2009) are those persons or organizations that have, or claim to have an interest or share in the project undertaking and management in any education system. They individuals or group with an interest in the success of an organization or educational institution in fulfilling its mission—delivering intended results and maintaining the viability of its products, services and outcomes over time. Examples of important stakeholders in the Nigerian education sector as outlined by Morphy (2008) include; the government, administrators, administrative staff, teachers, students, after school clubs and alumni associations, catering staff, chaplain, pastoral team, charities e.g. scouts, brownies and guides city, or local authority councilors, clerks, community members, curriculum providers and developers, faith organizations, families, finance department and bursar, government departments, medical team, local residents, business leaders, school governors, school counsellors, drivers, suppliers, school board, social workers, among many others. Stakeholders in education sector and system as posited by Paine and McCann (2009) are grouped into two namely: internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are those who work within the school system on a daily basis and who largely control what goes on there. They include school staff, district staff, and, to some extent, school boards. External stakeholders are those outside the day-to-day work of the schools who have a strong interest in school outcomes but who do not directly determine what goes into producing those outcomes. Warsi (2018) opined that the school stakeholders are important because they are associated with the welfare and success of a school and its students. In citing an instance, the curriculum development requires the input of different stakeholders such as parents, teachers, school heads, administration, and school boards. Generally, education stakeholders ensure the education sector is effectively managed in order to achieve the educational goals and objectives.

Describing most of these important stakeholders in the education sector, Warsi (2018) noted that school administrators, who monitor the implementation of the curriculum and education policies, play a vital role in structuring and developing the school and students. Furthermore, they are responsible for the purchasing of learning materials which are essential for curriculum implementation. They are usually informed by teachers, students, and the community about the success of their curriculum. They can also employ the services of professional for evaluating the performance of the curriculum. Parents influence the implementation of the curriculum by playing a vital role in monitoring the lessons taught at schools, filling the gap between their children and the school administration by providing various resources which are not available in school. Teachers often take help of parents for monitoring the social and behavioral development of a child, especially for special educational needs. Professionals like the psychologists and social workers are known for their contribution towards special schools and their children. These stakeholders provide useful options for dealing with students of foreign origin or those with disabilities. Often acting as school board members, community members are usually seen contributing to the various resources which are not found at school premises. Government and the professional regulation commission as stakeholders in the education sector make their contributions towards providing effective policies and the necessary resources for the education system.

### **Nigerian Education Sector**

The Nigerian education sector and system according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014, p. vii) has been structured into various levels of; i.) the Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) arranged for children between the ages of 0-4 years; ii.) Basic Education for children aged between 5-15 years and encompasses 1-year Pre-primary Education, 6 years of Primary Education and 3years of Junior Secondary Education; iii.) Post-Basic Education of 3 years in Senior Secondary schools and Technical Colleges; and iv.) Tertiary Education provided in the Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics and the Universities. All these education systems in the sector have their different goals and objectives in order to fit into different individuals' dispositions, needs and interests. However, the present pandemic has affected the operations of the Nigerian education sector because of the lockdown and necessity to contain the coronavirus pandemic. Given the present and true positions of the Nigerian education system, there are still yet some

important matters arising and trending issues in relation to the difficulties which seem to inhibit effective educational management in the education sector during the pandemic period and such issues have been discussed in the next section.

### **Trending Issues in Educational Management in the Nigerian Education Sector during the Pandemic Period**

The Nigerian education sector as previously identified in the paper is a critical factor for human capacity building, social transformation and sustainable national development. Notwithstanding the important role of education sector in the society, yet there are important pending matters which are trending issues which seem to create difficulties towards effective educational management of the Nigerian education sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. Such trending issues which needs urgent attention include poor funding of the Nigerian education sector, poor accessibility to information and communication technologies in education institutions, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate provision of both human and materials resources, insecurity challenges, inappropriate supervision, monitoring and evaluation system, among others. Some of these serious trending issues have been discussed below.

1. **Poor Funding of Education Sector:** The issue of poor and under funding of the Nigerian education system have been long existed, which still trends and worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic era. It has been observed that educational funding and financing dropped drastically during the COVID-19 pandemic era because government efforts was focused and channeled on the health sector. The Global Partnership for Education (2020) lamented on this new development by commenting that the Nigerian education system during the COVID-19 pandemic era is been challenged by shortage of funds which will continue to affect schools' reopening. Gambo and Fasanmi (2019) and Rashida (n.d) likewise observed that managers of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria are in consensus that during the COVID-19 pandemic era, these educational institutions were grossly underfunded. Evidence exists on the degree of dilatation that characterizes many primary, secondary and tertiary institutions buildings in parts of the country, the non-payment of teachers' salaries and allowances, the lack of necessary teaching and learning materials at all levels of the educational system, poor working conditions of all teachers in the country, amount other indices. The implication of poor funding of education sector during the COVID-19 pandemic era has negative impact educational management. This means that quality education cannot be provided in the education sector (Gambo & Fasanmi, 2019). Nevertheless, adequate funding or financial supports in education will go a long way in improving the use of technology and online digital platforms, strengthening states radio and television education programmes and providing printed take-home materials for students: activity books, worksheets and assessment cards both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic era. Adequate funds will help to provide psychosocial support to children and teachers; provision of wash and hygiene supplies to schools; prepare a comprehensive back-to-school campaign and social mobilization to initiate safe school reopening; and to establish a remote monitoring system to measure the progress in learning and effectiveness of the education delivery system (Global Partnership for Education, 2020). Adequate financial input is crucial to the success of any system of education during the pandemic period. But with the challenge of poor and insufficient funding of the Nigerian education sector, it will be difficult for education system at all levels to meet up with the demands and implement the COVID-19 preventive or safety measures. With appropriate funding of the Nigerian education system at all levels this will enable more classrooms to be built in order to observe social distancing. This will help educational institutions to provide the necessary sanitary facilities such as water points, pipe borne water and taps, waste bins, detergents and disinfectants, gender fitting toilets, face masks, isolation centres in schools and varieties of kits, among others, which will guarantee students safety in school.

2. **Technological Challenges:** The poor accessibility to information and communication technologies coupled with online emerging technologies have affected educational management in education institutions, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic era. Lack of access to emerging technologies or fast, good and reliable internet access and connectivity, is an obstacle to continued learning which can prevent students in the rural areas and students from disadvantaged families from learning especially during the COVID-19 pandemic era. In the use

of technology in education during the COVID-19 pandemic era, Ladipo and Adebiori (2020) stated that now is the time to bridge the gap of educational inequity by ensuring adequate funding and provision of educational resources like the use of emerging technological facilities in the education sector. Such emerging technologies as the use of video and audio conferencing, social media apps, WhatsApp, zoom, virtual realities, Google applications such as the google classroom, google meet, google hangouts, google calendar, drive, among others, can be highly utilized in educational management during the COVID-19 pandemic era. To cushion the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is embracing new and emerging technological innovations. Virtual interactions are increasingly adopted to replace face-to-face engagements and limit the total disruption to many sectors. UNESCO recommended the use of distance learning programmes, open educational applications, and platforms by schools and teachers to reach learners remotely. These could include integrated digital learning platforms, video lessons, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and broadcast through radio and television (Ladipo & Adebiori, 2020). The success of these recommendations hinges on the use of high-technology or low-technology solutions, which are based on the reliability of local power supply, internet connectivity and digital skills of teachers, students, parents, and caretakers. But every student cannot afford this; as pleasant as this solution is, it is said that students from under-served low-income communities were left out and unable to access internet learning during the COVID-19 period era (Ladipo & Adebiori, 2020). In Nigeria, many states embarked on airing school lessons on radio and television and which was highly commendable. Obviously, COVID-19 is magnifying the educational inequity in Nigeria as only those with access to digital learning resources kept on learning in the comfort of their homes while those without access (the majority) were left behind. This means that there are a lot of students who did not have access to either radio or television, coupled with the issue of erratic power supply. Such students also had no internet access nor educational technological resources, a situation that created a gap in their academic progress.

3. High Students' Enrolment causing Overcrowded Classrooms in the Educational Institutions: With the high increase in students' enrolment which causes overcrowded classrooms and large class sizes, it becomes difficult to observe the social distancing during and after the COVID-19 pandemic era. Without any doubt, the Nigerian education sector at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels face the problem of overcrowded and large class sizes due to the incessant high students' enrolments and admissions. Lawal (2019) reported that one of the largest challenges which still trends is assessment of student learning from a distance. Overcrowding in schools' bothers everybody in the country including education policy researchers and teachers; the latter worry about meeting the needs of more students and with fewer resources. According to a report by the Data Centre of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, of all the 189 countries, Nigeria is among four nations with the highest number of overcrowded classrooms in its primary and secondary schools including tertiary institutions. Increase in students' enrolment in Nigeria's public schools is a major concern to all stakeholders with classrooms bursting at their streams. The actual number of students recommended by the UNESCO for a single classroom is between 30 and 35 and any classroom that has an extra student is considered to be overcrowded and not good for learning and teaching. With excessive students' enrolment in schools and overcrowded classrooms, this poses great health risk to the life of students at the various levels of the Nigerian education system. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) observed that there is a high health risk for easy transmission of the Coronavirus through overcrowded places. Outbreaks of disease are more frequent and more severe when the population density is high. Decreasing overcrowding by providing extra facilities and a proper organization of the sites or services in health-care facilities is a priority (WHO, 2020). The overarching question from all the above statements is that how would the Nigerian education sector observe social distancing whereby the classrooms are already overcrowded. If school's resumes without making provisions on spacing students in the classroom, this will lead easily lead to the spread of the coronavirus, meaning more health risk and deaths among the students.

4. Inadequate Educational Resources: Educational resources refers to all human and material resources requisite to promote effective teaching and learning (Nwaham, 2011). Examples include school plants facilities, electronic devices, models, among others. But the problem of inadequate resources, together with poor

accessibility to information and communication technologies in education institutions create difficulties towards effective educational management of the Nigerian education sector during the COVID-19 pandemic era. The Global Partnership for Education (2020) opined that the Nigerian education system suffers from poor quality and relevance due to poor infrastructure and learning conditions. Experience from many schools in Nigeria shows that they lack the requisite human (that is, teachers) and material resources which will aid effective management of teaching and learning. Many schools lack adequate infrastructure classrooms, instructional materials and teaching aids, among others which will enhance teaching and learning. Adeoye, Adanikin and Adanikin (2020) and Mustafa (2020) observed that the greatest challenges facing the education system during the COVID-19 pandemic era are the problem of unequal access to educational resources and unequal access to educational technology and e-learning usually associated with high purchasing cost. Lack of educational resources, limitations and exceptions to copyright can also have an impact on the ability of students to access the online textbooks and materials they need to study during the COVID-19 pandemic era.

5. Inadequacy of Effective Guidance and Counselling Services during the COVID-19 Pandemic Era: Inadequate use of effective guidance and counselling services coupled with online counselling both at the lower and higher streams in educational institutions seems to become a big challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic era. Effective guidance and counselling services as observed by the FRN (2014) is one of the educational support services that will aid the control of the spread of the virus in schools. Varieties of guidance and counselling services should be utilized in order to maximize the educational, well-being and health benefit for students, teachers, staff and the wider community, and help prevent a new outbreak of COVID-19 in the community. But unfortunately within the Nigerian education sector, the guidance and counselling services and programmes are not effectively utilized (Anagbogu, Nwokolo, Anyamene, Anyachebelu & Umezulike, 2013). Mielgo-Conde, Seijas-Santos and Grande-de-Prado (2021) observed that one of the greatest challenge of guidance and counselling during the COVID-19 pandemic era was schools' inability to appropriately and adequately use online guidance to reach out to students. School counsellors in many cases were unable to provide the desired follow-up for students who needed it. However, Bozkurt and Sharma (2020) believe that the role of the guidance counsellor is as important as the teacher himself, as the counsellor is the first assistant in understanding students and guiding them towards the mechanism of dealing with the school environment and understanding the differences between them in terms of mental, intellectual, emotional and physiological. Therefore, the need for a psychological counsellor to assist in solving many psychological and behavioural problems suffered by school students during the COVID-19 pandemic era. From all the foregoing discussions, the role of important stakeholders in educational management of the Nigerian education sector especially during the pandemic period become necessary and which has further been discussed in the next section.

### **Role of Stakeholders in Educational Management During the COVID-19 Pandemic Era**

The Nigerian education stakeholders has important role to play during the COVID-19 pandemic era. The Great Schools Partnership (2014) asserted that as part of a reform strategy, involving a variety of education stakeholders from the broader community in the management of all the levels, that is, ECCDE, basic/primary education, secondary and tertiary education including the non-formal education sector of the Nigerian education system can go a long way in improving the education system especially during this pandemic period. This will help to strengthen communication and boost public understanding of the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. The education stakeholders' inputs and relations are therefore key parts of planning, implementing and evaluating complex health promotion and education programmes in schools during the pandemic period (Great Schools Partnership, 2014). Ladipo and Adebori (2020) opined that one of the palliative measures that can be adopted by the stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic era includes a public-private partnership with non-profits and other government agencies who are working to salvage the situation. Such efforts can be supported through the provision of adequate funds for the education sector at this critical time. From the foregoing discussions, the role of the stakeholders such as the government and policy makers, school administrators, parents and school counsellor during the COVID-19 pandemic era were discussed.

## **Government and Policy Makers**

The government and policy makers control the general affairs of the country and likewise those of the education sector and system. They promulgate and formulate education policies which are usually implemented at the different levels of the education sector and systems. The government as described by Asiyai (2015) is the owner of public state and federal educational institutions in Nigeria. The federal and state governments own and finances both federal and state educational institutions through their representative and regulatory agencies such as the Ministry of Education, Secondary Education Management Boards, Universal Basic Education Commission and State Boards, National University Commission (NUC) for the universities, National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) for the colleges of education, and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) for the polytechnics. In Nigeria, government has continued to be the main financier of education. Government and policy makers can influence the improvement of educational management in the Nigerian education sector during the COVID-19 pandemic era by ensuring sufficient and relevant funding and establishment of effective policies for schools and educational institutions in the country. Government must ensure that relevant curriculum is implemented in the education system and also see to it that such curriculum is constantly reviewed in line with market demands. The successful implementation of policies for the educational development in schools rely on government to plan ahead and develop strategies to address issues of maintenance to each area will increase the likelihood of successfully implementing the planned programmes and reorienting the physical conditions of schools to achieve sustainability. During the COVID-19 pandemic era, the government and policy makers are responsible for policy formulations, provision of adequate funds for the education system, provision of facilities such as isolation centres, instructional materials, classrooms, sanitary equipment and kits such as hand sanitizers, face masks, among others, and monitoring the affairs and activities of the education system, among others.

The government and policy makers have their representatives like the Federal and State Ministry of Education, and other officials who handle education affairs. Officials of the government and ministry ensure policy provisions are applied at the work place. The government as part of their policy initiatives through Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2020) mapped out guidelines and strategies for school safety at resumption. This includes among others: maintaining social distancing in the school environment; for instance, classrooms, staff rooms, dining halls and office should have sufficient space to allow two-meters separation between individuals. Alternative learning modes such as outdoor learning, staggered attendance, alternate attendance and platooning, among others, should be utilized for safe distancing. Promotion of safe and hygiene environment through disinfection and fumigation of facilities. Set up hygiene committees designated in schools for hygiene campaign to monitor and promote compliance. Sensitize, train, and build capacity of teachers, administrators, and other education personnel to effectively use and comply with the School COVID-19 Referral System and protocols for safe distancing and hygiene in schools. Equip and resource schools for improved teaching and learning methods. Provide WASH facilities including soap, hand sanitizers, and girls' dignity kits in schools. Establish and adequately equip dispensaries and clinics as appropriate. Use solar power and alternative energy sources for electricity, and boreholes for water. Establish monitoring and evaluation framework, monitoring teams, tools, and schedules to track and report progress on safe reopening and operations. Train teachers, administrators, and other education personnel on safety and hygiene measures disinfection, safe distancing, hand washing, use of masks, respiratory etiquette and waste management. Create immediate temporary isolation space. Maintain regular contact and collaborate with health authorities on school safety, health, and hygiene. Develop appropriate mental health and psychosocial support services that address stigmatization and discrimination to assist learners, teachers, administrators, and other education personnel and their families to cope with the effects of COVID-19 and continued uncertainties of the pandemic. Make adequate provisions for school feeding where applicable to encourage learners to return and sustain attendance. Reduce number of learners, teachers, administrators, and other education personnel in classrooms, staff rooms, dormitories, and cafeterias in line with NCDC social distancing (two meters apart) guideline. Provide WASH facilities and water points in line with WASH guidelines and pre-scribed standards;

ensure regular toilet cleaning and good hygiene practices. Arrange learners' seats to comply with NCDC safe distancing (two meters apart) guideline while enabling learners to interact and collaborate as much as possible. Encourage digital inclusion so that poor and vulnerable learners have access to technology for learning. Carry out continuous advocacy, sensitization, and mobilization for sustained awareness, required behavioral changes and compliance to prescribed safety measures and protocols in schools. Ensure diligent temperature checks with non-contact thermometers at school entrances for all staff, learners, and visitors (FME, 2020). Government should therefore play an important role by ensuring that the education sector comply and implement the above guidelines effectively. They must make available in schools the necessary requirements and facilities for a safe and hygiene environment.

### **Education Regulatory Bodies and Agencies**

A regulatory body as defined by Bartleby.com (2020) is a public authority or government agency responsible for exercising autonomous authority over some area of human activity in a regulatory or supervisory capacity. An independent regulatory agency is a regulatory agency that is independent from other branches or arms of the government. Regulatory bodies are set up because there are laws and they ensure legislation is implemented. In the Nigerian education system, the following regulatory bodies or agencies have been charged with the responsibility of supervising and coordinating the activities of the different levels of the education system. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and State Universal Basic Education (SUBEB) coordinates activities for basic/primary education, Secondary Education Management Board (SEMB) coordinates the activities of the secondary schools, National Universities Commission (NUC) for universities, National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) coordinates for polytechnics and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) for colleges of education. Each of these regulatory bodies have their mandates and responsibilities especially in monitoring both academic and teaching staff activities in the various institutions. Asiyai (2015) citing an instance with the role of the national universities commission coupled with other regulatory agencies says it is the regulator of university education in Nigeria. It regulates all the activities of public and private universities in Nigeria. The NUC is charged with the main responsibility of ensuring quality and quality assurance in Nigerian universities. The NUC has a quality assurance unit that is responsible for using international best practices on quality assurance. The NUC demands accountability from universities and checks the overall effectiveness and efficiency of programme offerings and all activities of Nigerian universities. The NUC sets the minimum standards regarding qualification of teachers, the quality of teaching in institutions, number of students to be admitted, enrolled and the universities carrying capacity. As a way of improving quality, the NUC regularly monitors the activities of universities and conducts a need assessment exercise. During the COVID-19 pandemic era, these regulatory agencies of the various levels of the Nigerian education sector and system should ensure that their institution show compliance with all the safety guidelines in order to promote a healthy school environment and effective educational management that befits students learning.

### **School Administrators and Heads/Leadership**

School administrators, heads and leadership such as the head teachers, principals, Vice Chancellors of the universities, Rectors of polytechnics and Provosts of colleges of education play exceptional roles in educational management of the education system. The overall achievement of educational objectives depends of the school administrators. They are charged with the responsibilities of running the daily affairs of their schools and implementation of the curriculum and education policy in the school. All the instructional academic and non-academic or extracurricular activities lies upon the school administrator who is assisted by other auxiliary or supportive staff like their Vice, departmental heads and directors of various committees. The Ministry of Education, Guyana (2012) indicated the role of administrators and management of educational institutions to include; advising the Board of policy implications, developing institutional School Health and Nutrition - SHN/HIV and other related diseases plan and strategies, ensuring that the policy is reflected in school improvement plans, agreeing on appointment of an SHN/HIV Focal Point or Committee; ensuring safe and sanitary work and study environments, integrating strategies and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation;

and providing data to regional and national SHN/HIV coordinators. The administrators should however, play significant roles the COVID-19 pandemic era. According to the Great Schools Partnership (2014), school administrators have the following responsibility to: ensure the policy is reflected in the school Strategic Improvement and Annual Operational Plans; ensure the policy and associated documentation is provided to school staff, families, guardians and caregivers in a format that is understood and meets their needs; ensure that members of the school community have access to appropriate professional development opportunities around the students; deliver quality educational programmes that respond to the needs and abilities of all students, including students with disabilities; ensure that the school develops, implements, evaluates and reviews the Education Adjustment Plan, Behaviour Plan, Health Care Plan or Student Support Plan for the students including those with disabilities; ensure that stakeholders are invited, with reasonable notice, to meetings concerning students profile, educational planning and other relevant education decisions; report outcomes in the School Performance Reports to the school community; report to, and actively initiate and maintain, consultation with families, guardians and caregivers with regard to the educational placement of their children and their ongoing—educational programmes; ensure that the identification and provision of educational programmes for students in accordance with the policy; ensure, in consultation with Directors School Performance, and within recognized constraints, that appropriate resources are provided for the implementation of effective education programmes for all students; inform Student Support, and other relevant business units, of the specialized services and facilities, equipment, resources and training required to meet individual needs of students; and ensure that appropriate records are kept and disseminated in the school, among others. During the pandemic period school administrators and their auxiliary heads should ensure that they comply and monitor the guidelines of maintaining safety school environments through adequate provision of facilities, ensuring that adequate spacing is maintained for social distancing, provide better health and sanitary facilities in school such hand sanitizers, face mask, etc, promote and inculcate the culture of safety and healthy living among students and teachers in the school, promote online and digital learning in schools, support teachers constant orientation and training/retraining in the school, in collaboration with the coordinating regulatory bodies and agencies such as UBEC, SUBEB, Secondary Education Management Board (SEMB), NUC, NBTE and NCCE must ensure that isolation centres including other health kits are provided in school, among others.

### **School Guidance Counsellor**

Many people which included adults, youths and young children of school-going age were traumatized as a result of fear and anxiety of the COVID-19 pandemic. The fact that many students and children were out of school without deep understanding of the coronavirus coupled with the high rate of incessant deaths caused by the virus, kept many people traumatized. This situation called for effective guidance and counselling programme on health matters. Karaman, Esici, Tomar and Aliyev (2021) found out in their study that students' difficulties during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak were educational, cognitive, emotional, physiological, relational, technological, and related to routines. Academic, personal—social, emotional, family relations and behavioural issues came to the fore among the difficulties that were experienced when students started face-to-face education. Therefore, it became vital that student personality services together with services for the teachers and the family to be prepared and well-implemented by school counselling services for schools. The school guidance and counsellors including psychologists are expected to work with the health officials in schools in order to assist students cope with the COVID-19 situation and maintain all the guidelines both during and post COVID-19 era. Also, through effective guidance and counselling services such as health guidance and counselling, educational or academic guidance and counselling, social or personal guidance and counselling, vocational guidance and counselling, referral counselling and other counselling services assist students to face the difficulties of COVID-19 pandemic era. Anagbogu, Nwokolo, Anyamene, Anyachebelu and Umezulike (2013), guidance and counseling practice is mainly concerned with the ways of assisting the individuals to understand themselves and the world around them, be able to utilize their potentials to the fullest and live a normal and well-adjusted lives. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT, 2018) explains that any assistance made available by competent counsellors to an individual of any group to help

him/her direct the life course, develop a point of view, make decisions and be better adjusted. The school guidance counsellor therefore, is a licensed mental health therapist who provide assessment, diagnosis and counselling to people facing a variety of life stressing and psychological problems (Miller, 2018). The American School Counselling Association (ASCA, 2010) opined that school counsellors perform certain roles and tasks in the school. They are involved in developing school guidance curriculum, student planning, individual and group counselling, consultations, referrals, psycho-education, intervention, and advocacy. The responsibilities of the school guidance counsellor include helping students in the areas of academic achievement, health, personal, social development and career development. As professionals with requisite skills, they are often the first ones to see a problem with a student (ASCA, 2010). The Global Education Cluster (2020) opined that school counsellors should be prepared to play the role of meeting the psychosocial and protection needs of students, children and young people and to manage their own health and wellbeing especially during the COVID-19 pandemic era, update school-based reporting and referral mechanisms for protection and health concerns, ensuring they are gender-sensitive, inclusive and age-appropriate adapted for COVID context if necessary. The counsellors are to establish procedures to follow in case of suspected infection, including guidance for school staff to discreetly deal with children and young people/teachers who show symptoms without creating harm for the individual. Educate children and young people about good hygiene, health, nutrition and menstrual hygiene. Ensure hygiene practices, including physical distancing and alternatives to sharing materials with others, are in place and integrated into classroom activities, among others (Global Education Cluster, 2020).

### **Teachers**

For effective educational management during the COVID-19 pandemic era, teachers must be fully involved. This is so because teachers as experts promote the teaching and learning processes. They stand at the forefront of students' learning and no education can take place without the presence of a teacher. Teachers are important factors necessary for curriculum and education policy implementation at the classroom level. They are important machineries who stand at the forefront of every student learning and are charged with the responsibilities of promoting quality students' learning in the school. Teachers bear the crux and responsibility of promoting and establishing healthy behaviours and good health habits among students at all levels of the education system. Teachers impart knowledge and skills to students and therefore deserve conducive environment, good remuneration and capacity development that will help them to turn out quality products. Achievement of all educational and instructional goals largely depend on teachers in the classroom. As such, they should play significant role in safeguarding students safety because only a healthy student can be highly involved in academics. The Ministry of Education, Guyana (2012) opined that teachers perform complexity of roles in the school. They adhere to the policy and support its implementation. The Great Schools Partnership (2014) opined that teachers have the following responsibility to: deliver quality educational programmes that respond to the needs and abilities of all students, including students with disabilities; and develop, implement, evaluate and review education adjustment plan for the students. Asiyai (2015) says that teachers' roles must include: adopting a good work ethics and habit, encouraging team work, innovation and creativity among students, providing guidance to students in their learning, ensuring effective classroom management and control during instruction, creating positive leaning environment or climate so that students can actively be involved in learning process to ensure in them, a permanent change in desirable behaviour, promoting classroom atmosphere that motivates self-directed and cooperative learning, communicating with parents students learning progress, ensuring that students attend their studies regularly and timely, ensuring that lessons are student-centered, teaching effectively, using active learning strategies, avoiding unethical conducts such as poor teaching, aiding examination malpractice and missing students' scores, conducting researches that can help improve instructional practices, and monitoring and evaluating students learning. Therefore, during the COVID-19 pandemic era, teachers would supervise students' by ensuring that they maintain effective classroom management for promoting a healthy and safe school environment. Teachers should play the guidance role of encouraging students to strictly adhere to all the safety guidelines provided by the health officials in order to

safeguard themselves during the pandemic period. Of course, before teachers would be competent to initiate all the safety and health guidelines in the classroom, they should receive adequate training and orientation. The Global Education Cluster (2020) asserted that teachers need to be supported through training programmes in order to receive adequate information on how they can contribute to a safe return to school for themselves and all learners. An investment in the teacher wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic era and schools reopening phase will result in long-term benefits, as teachers can act as community ‘thought leaders’, ensuring safety, health and education continuity.

## **Parents**

Parents are important stakeholders in the Nigerian education sector who can play contributive roles during the COVID-19 pandemic era. Cotton and Wikelund (2001) opined that parents’ contributions are numerous in educational management for the improvement of the quality of education system at all levels in the Nigerian education sector. Parents support in educational management range from adequate provision of educational resources down to support of emotional needs of students and their wards. Parents are to ensure that their children are provided with adequate learning materials needed for their academic activities especially the during COVID-19 pandemic era. Adequate provision must be made for students in terms of buying their food stuff, payment of tuition fees, provision of accommodation, ensuring students’ accessibility to online learning and provision of books. Parents could also play the roles of provision of counselling to ensure that their children stay in school, attend lectures, develop good study habits and learn effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic era. Parents should also play the role of provision of spiritual support for their children while at school through praying for them. The primary objective of parents is the assurance of their children quality education which will enable them to lead productive and rewarding adult life in a global society (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001). Klepfer (2020) observed that parents need to be a positive role model for the child in helping to shape the child's opinions and attitudes about learning. They need to display a positive attitude toward school in general. If parents have a positive attitude, the child will also have that positive attitude toward school. Parents must be careful in how they address school concerns in front of their child. If they display a negative attitude towards schooling, their child may adopt that as his/her own attitude toward school. By recognizing the roles of parents in their child's education and offering them support to reach those roles, staff members are enjoined to communicate to parents that their role in their child's education is valued. By working together, staff and parents can create and maintain a high-quality educational programme for children during the COVID-19 pandemic era. The role of parents may be divided into three main categories: (1) the parent's role in showing support for their child's education, (2) the parent's role in making their home a good place for learning, and (3) the parent's role in helping with homework. Following a brief introduction to each topic, a list of suggestions for parents has been provided. The Great Schools Partnership (2014) opined that parents owe it as their responsibilities to: initiate and maintain constructive communication and relationships with schools and other involved providers to achieve the best educational, social and emotional outcomes for the students; and they actively participate in the planning, implementation, and review of education adjustment plans, designed to assist the student to achieve optimum educational outcomes. Both parents and teachers form the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) always work with education institutions, school boards and the wider community; and mobilize materials, funding, and technical support from stakeholders. PTA complements governments efforts in the provision and maintenance of infrastructure in the schools. Despite the laudable roles of PTA in secondary schools it appears that the problems of maintenance of the schools still thrive and it therefore presupposes that the roles of the PTA can be strengthened in order to enhance better community participation in the schools. During the COVID-19 pandemic era, parents are duty-bound to support their wards, children and students through improvisation of the needed health facilities and kits to protect them in the school environment. Parents should ensure that the provide hand sanitizers, face masks, detergents, among others. They should provide children with food that has great nutritional value in order to boost their immune system as well.

## **Students**

The students are the center of learning; they are always at the receiving end in every teaching and learning. Active involvement of children and students in the design and implementation of health programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic era should also not be ignored either. Their input will bring greater participation and tackle issues over barriers and palatability of interventions. Asiyai (2015) commented that students are the customers in the education industry striving to get the best education. The essence of the establishment of any institution of learning is to ensure the sound development of students academically, morally, socially, politically, spiritually. Students must be made an integral part of the success of any educational institution. Successful institutions encourage significant participation by students, teachers and parents (Wilson, 2008 cited in Asiyai, 2015). Consequently, school administrators should incorporate students in the participative decision making of the institution. Asiyai (2015) further clarifies that empowering students with shared decision making increases their choices and responsibilities of their own learning. Students can gain the skills, knowledge, values and attributes needed for productive and viable living in the society through participation in institutional decision making. For quality education, students must be encouraged to exercise their decision making roles in the education process especially participation in decision in issues pertaining to their academics. The attainment of quality requires that students resume at their institutions at expected date, regularly attend their lectures so that they can learn and avoid issues of academic misconduct. During the COVID-19 pandemic era, it is the responsibility of students, still under the guidance of other stakeholders, to adhere and comply to the school rules and regulations including compliance to the guidelines of maintaining a safe school environment (Klepfer, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

The role and contributions of all education stakeholders in the education sector especially during the COVID-19 pandemic era cannot be overemphasized. This is so because, stakeholders support and ensure effective educational management at all the levels of the education sector for goal attainment. It is however disturbing that in Nigeria especially during the COVID-19 pandemic era, lack of stakeholders' commitment has led to the poor state of infrastructure and new developments in many educational institutions. Education stakeholders must therefore, be fully concerned and involved in the general management of the education sector especially during this pandemic period for the safety of students in schools. Finally, to encourage stakeholders' involvement in the Nigerian education sector so as to address the persistent difficulties and trending issues facing effective educational management during the pandemic era, this situation calls for effective school partnership and synergy with both internal and external education stakeholders for the continual development of the education sector. Thus, the following suggestions which have been made in the paper.

## **Suggestions**

1. The government at all levels of education in collaboration with other community stakeholders should adequately fund the education sector for effective management of educational institutions during and post COVID-19 pandemic era.
2. Adequate use of technological resources and facilities should be highly implemented, encouraged and supported for effective management of schools through adequate financing and resource provision during and after the COVID-19 pandemic era.
3. The issue of high students' enrolment and admission causing overcrowded classrooms and large class sizes should be strictly checkmated in education sector by the regulatory and supervisory agencies in order to ensure schools' compliance with admission policies and carrying capacity policy during and post COVID-19 pandemic era.
4. All education stakeholders should support schools in the procurement of adequate educational resources for effective management of educational institutions during and after the COVID-19 pandemic era.
5. School administrators should ensure adequate use of effective guidance and counselling services coupled with online counselling for effective management of schools during and after the COVID-19 pandemic era.

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