

# Educational Preparedness for Virtual Teaching and Learning during COVID-19 Lockdowns: Implication for Policy Innovation

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| Vuyiswa Sandrah Nyathi<sup>1,\*</sup> | Joyce Mathwasa<sup>2</sup> |

<sup>1</sup>Midlands State University

<sup>2</sup>National University of Science  
and Technology

<sup>1</sup>[nyathiv@staff.msu.ac.zw](mailto:nyathiv@staff.msu.ac.zw),

<sup>2</sup>[jmathwasa1@gmail.com](mailto:jmathwasa1@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

The COVID 19, global pandemic that gripped Zimbabwe throughout 2020 and beyond posed numerous challenges across sectors, including education. As a result of this disaster, several state governments devised mitigation strategies to address challenges. In light of the foregoing, the paper intends to conduct a critical review of the education sector's emergency response to the COVID19 crisis using the document analysis method. It evaluates this strategy as an alternative approach for teaching and learning, revealing its strengths, challenges, and gaps, as well as fostering recommendations for its improvement for future policy innovations. The study used a desk-review methodology, also known as systematic inquiry, to critically evaluate the foundation of education and psychology using empirically researched secondary data (Mertens 2010), which has the potential to yield important new knowledge about virtual teaching and learning where distance is not a barrier. Up to now, a number of challenges and gaps have emerged in this emergency response, necessitating the development of effective and efficient catastrophe preparedness and response policies by educational policymakers. The study findings revealed that there are gaps in Zimbabwe's disaster legislation, which has an impact on the preparedness of education for it to embark in virtual learning during COVID-19 lockdown. The research also found that the education sector is not adequately prepared for disaster risk reduction in order to reduce the sector's vulnerability. The study suggests that intensive mobilization of resource and capacity building be undertaken so as to achieve the envisioned goals in education, with no child left behind.

## KEYWORDS

pandemic; lockdown; e-learning; teaching and learning, strategy; education; policy.

## INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe's education system has progressed past the colonial era, which was marked by racial discrimination that favoured the white population (Riddell 1998). The post-colonial era was motivated by the "growth with equity principle" and attempted to address colonial biases to a large extent, with the construction of many schools to accommodate increased student enrolment, redressing gender equity issues, and executing favourable educational policies in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) As a result, the literacy rate in Zimbabwe increased from 77.79 percent in 1982; to 83.51 percent in 1992; to 83.58 percent in 2011 and to 88.69 percent in 2014 (UNDP,

2011). This impressive growth and development in eradicating illiteracy in Zimbabwe has been dented by worldwide pandemic which caused the government to declare the closing of schools, institutions and the reduction of business hours in March 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic that spread throughout the world resulting in national lockdowns across countries which put a halt to economic activities as well as education. It meant the closure of all educational institutions for fear of the virus spreading and affecting both students and teachers. The traditional method of teaching and learning, that is, face-to-face classes, came to an end as the World Health Organization tightened COVID-19 protocols, necessitating the need for alternative lesson delivery methods. Countries worldwide have issued warnings to the public to be cautious. Handwashing, wearing face masks, keeping a physical distance, and avoiding large crowds and assemblies have all been recommended as public health measures. Due to the pandemic, lockdown and stay-at-home stratagems have been implemented as a way of flattening the curve as well as to control the transmission of the disease (Sintema, 2020).

The education sector, among others, was confronted with a major challenge in the form of lockdowns, which had a variety of ramifications in educational activities. Intervention measures were required to ensure that learning continued, and that high-quality education was provided throughout the COVID-19 lockdown, with no child left behind. The best strategy for ensuring educational continuity was to use a virtual teaching and learning approach (Dhawan, 2020; Raheem & Khan, 2020). Adoption of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) became critical in order to ensure that learners continued to have access to their fundamental right to education. Many developed countries have shifted to virtual classrooms as a means of education delivery, where students are remotely taught via electronic platforms; however, in countries such as Zimbabwe, virtual classrooms were delivered prematurely due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education implemented an online learning curriculum long before the COVID-19 pandemic, but it has been hampered by a number of issues (Chimururi, undated). One area where most countries, including Zimbabwe, have lagged behind is the promotion of technology in the school system. The problem is that, while the majority of schools and other educational institutions in developed countries have organised access to computers and the internet, developing countries such as Zimbabwe are not well-equipped. According to Moore (2000), owing to inadequate financial resources and underprivileged infrastructure in the greater parts of Africa, approximately 700,000 people (about 0.1 percent of the population) use basic internet services such as email and WhatsApp. Although computers have been used in the educational curriculum for some time in the country, their use has been limited to a few well-funded non-government schools. The majority of schools lack basic computer technology facilities, such as electricity. The goal of this research is to determine the best way forward for education and learning systems in Zimbabwe and in other developing countries after COVID-19 and further impending pandemics. The gap was identifying and allocating novel or groundbreaking modes of learning for children growing up in already difficult and impoverished circumstances in Zimbabwe and other African countries. Despite being carried out in Zimbabwe, the study could be applied to developing countries worldwide. The paper examines the education sector's preparedness for the COVID-19 strategy in pursuing continued quality education and protecting the right to quality, safe, and inclusive education for all children as enshrined in the nation's constitution. Furthermore, the paper examines the strengthening of educators' capacities to meet the dynamic needs of learners even during the pandemic period, and also the willingness of

stakeholders to provide adequate information and material resources for teaching and learning strategies in the new normal, which is the online system. According to the review, the strategy has a number of advantages for the education sector. These include, to name a few, the continuation of safe education even during an emergency such as COVID-19, the development of technological skills by both the educator and the learner, the innovativeness and variety of teaching and learning approaches, learners having access to lessons regardless of location, and access to archived and shared learning materials. It is hoped that this paper will aid in the identification of cooperating partners who are capable of mobilizing resources and fostering strategies that will ensure that no child is left behind in continuing their education, including children with physical challenges, orphans, and vulnerable children (OVC).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### ***Desk Research***

The path that researchers must take in order to conduct their research is referred to as research methodology. This paper used desk-based research, also known as systematic inquiry, and relied on empirically examined secondary data collected without conducting fieldwork. Desk research is a type of research that is based on data published in reports and similar documents available in public libraries, websites, and data obtained from previously conducted surveys (Tripathy, 2013). It is a research method that relies on of previously conducted studies in the similar area to the phenomenon under study. These are gathered and summarized to improve the investigation's overall effectiveness. Ideally, these published reports and statistics are unquestionably valuable sources (Andrews et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2011). In the context of this chapter, the term is broadened to include all non-field survey publications, such as reputable journals, books, and various published articles. Desk research, as the name implies, is a technique that is primarily acquired by sitting at a desk and collecting data from existing resources; as a result, it is often classified as a low and effective technique when compared to field research (Zhou & Nunes, 2016). However, in order to cut costs and save on time, the researcher must have the knowledge that can be adopted as a standard for the research technique. Because there is no human contact in data collection, there is less bias and violation of ethics, in addition to saving time and money. Another advantage was that the researchers had access to information about the phenomenon from the international community as a whole. However, there are limitations to the technique, such as the inability to authenticate the recorded facts and stringent access restrictions to some publications containing information deemed to be relevant.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Empirical Review***

COVID-19 has evolved into a global phenomenon that necessitates a global response. After affecting all sectors of national development, including education, new methods of schooling had to be devised. Traditional face-to-face teaching and learning posed a threat to human life and failed to meet WHO COVID-19 regulations. Distance and online learning, which is actually virtual, became more visible for all nations as a result of the COVID-19 social distancing protocol, which resulted in the closure of schools in order to reduce virus transmission. As a result, this section reviews currently available information and theories from research on virtual learning during COVID-19. Taylor (2020) defines

online learning as internet education that is either asynchronous (does not take place in real time) or synchronous (the learner and the teacher interact online at the same time).

### ***State of Preparedness for Virtual Learning***

It should be noted that a number of articles on virtual learning have been published around the world, ranging from policies to learner and educator perceptions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries around the world chose to use virtual learning, bringing the learning process closer to home and to the student. This type of learning necessitates extensive use of computers and the internet, among other things. Because of the availability of resources and skills, countries in the global North have better access to virtual learning than those in the global South. At the outset of COVID-19, countries such as China, Italy, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Vietnam, and Mongolia quickly turned to online teaching as a mitigation strategy to avoid lost school educational learning time. Bulgaria was able to open digital textbooks and other digital learning materials in a more innovative manner, as well as use smartphones for adapted learning platforms (Azzi-Huck and Shmis, 2020). During the start of COVID-19, universities in Saudi Arabia used the Blackboard online tool for distance online teaching and learning because they were already prepared for this mode of learning. Furthermore, Bozkurt et al (2020:52) report that developed countries with eras of experience in conducting distance and online education, such as Australia, quickly had teachers and learners upskilled in all kinds of technologies, making the COVID-19 education emergency response swift and effective.

Most countries in the global South's educational preparedness for the COVID-19 disaster has been woefully inadequate. Countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, to name a few, were unprepared for the disaster. The government of Namibia disclosed its lack of preparedness for the COVID-19 disaster response in terms of continuing education using alternative approaches, citing teachers' lack of familiarity with the technologies and pedagogies involved in online teaching and learning (Bozkurt, et al 2020). Virtual learning necessitates the involvement of critical stakeholders such as parents or guardians in distance learning and home schooling of the learners. The majority of parents were unprepared for this paradigm shift in the teaching and learning process.

According to the findings of Bozkurt et al (2020), countries such as South Africa, among others, are still under-equipped in terms of digital technology, equitable bandwidth access, digital literacy skills, and new pedagogies for the new normal in teaching and learning. Countries such as Egypt lack equitable access to digital devices and the internet for students and educators. Such disparities exist between poor and rich countries, as Mtetwa, (2021) mentions that approximately 89 percent of learners in Sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to household computers, while 82 percent do not have access to the internet. As of January 2020, internet penetration in Zimbabwe was 33%, with approximately 4.81 million internet users. Mtetwa (2021) further states that according to the MICS Report (2020), only 30.3 percent of Zimbabwean households have internet access from any device at home, 40 percent have a radio set, and 35.7 percent have a television set. Such challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa have a negative impact on virtual learning because these tools are critical in virtual learning during disasters when mobility is a challenge. As more schools around the world remained closed in accordance with WHO COVID-19 protocols to reduce the spread of the virus, various nations needed to devise more innovative policy measures to ensure continuity in teaching and learning with no learner left behind.

### ***Education Sector Emergency Strategies Adopted by Zimbabwe during COVID-19***

After schools closed in March 2020, there was a need for education to continue outside of the traditional face-to-face classroom setting. Policies and strategies were set up to combat the blowout of the COVID-19 virus while continuing to educate all students. Zimbabwe has signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that every child has the right to an education, which is also enshrined in the Zimbabwean constitution. According to Hudson et al. (2019), policy implementation is critical because policies do not fail or thrive on their own. The Zimbabwe National Preparedness and Response Plan was launched by the Zimbabwean government in March 2020 and is managed by an Inter-Ministerial Task Force. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) led the education sector's preparedness and response, which was supported by the Education Cluster and partners such as UNICEF and Save the Children (Thabela et al., 2020). According to Thabela et al (2020), Zimbabwe adopted an Education Cluster COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Strategy targeting 4.6 million learners, which emphasized the use of key activities that would allow for continuity of education with no child left behind while also fostering quality education that caters to the well-being of learners and teachers. Alternative learning approaches were incorporated into these key activities. Intervention strategies for this alternative learning included radio programming, the distribution of supplementary learning materials, as well as digital and online learning. All strategies are constantly monitored and evaluated, and necessary adjustments are made.

According to the Priority 1 strategy, radio programming that is appropriate for mass communication intervention reaches a large number of students, including those from low-income families who do not have access to digital devices for internet access. It also includes a group of physically challenged students who have mobility issues and visual impairment but can use their sense of hearing. This strategy, however, is ineffective for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Equally disadvantaged are learners coming from homes that do not have a radio. According to the ZBC Reporter (4 December 2021), the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is continuing to be proactive with mitigation initiatives such as the production of emergency learning modules, e-learning material, and radio and television lessons to ensure safe and quality education during the pandemic. The report also confirmed the broadcasting of all 16 indigenous national languages by the National FM station. These are the national languages of Barwe, Chewa, Chikunda, Doma, Hwesa, Kalanga, Khoisan, Nambya, Ndebele, Shangani, Shona, Tonga, Venda, Tswana, and Xhosa, as enshrined in the country's constitution, and this was in accordance with an agreement reached between the national broadcaster and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Online teaching has become one of the major learning strategies in Zimbabwe, despite a number of challenges, in order to ensure that no child is left behind in the teaching and learning process.

### ***Innovative Digital and Online Learning Platforms***

According to Nhongo and Tshotsho's (2021) research, Zimbabwe launched a home-grown online platform, Ruzivo, that caters to the Zimbabwean curriculum for primary and secondary school students. According to the study, the later introduced Ruzivo and Akello Digital Classroom and Akello E-Library platforms did not adequately meet the demands of online learning during times of emergency because they did not accommodate vulnerable groups such as disabled learners and rural learners. According to the World Bank (2020), 67.76 percent of Zimbabweans live in rural areas. In order to address the digital divide, the Zimbabwean government, in collaboration with UNICEF, has launched the Learning Passport online platform, which focuses on inclusive education. This learning platform,

according to UNICEF (2021), hosts radio lessons, syllabuses, teacher resource materials, and learning modules that include audio lessons, online books, videos, and interactive content. Furthermore, because it contains a digital library with teaching and learning resources for the national curriculum, this platform supports the new competency-based curriculum. However, no policy has been enacted for learning institutions to follow when it comes to these online platforms; only those who can afford the cost use them.

According to research and consultations conducted by the Zimbabwe Education Cluster team (Simba et al, 2020), blended learning, which already existed in some institutions of higher learning such as the Blended Education College of Southern Africa (BECSA) and the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU), was enhanced as a national strategy for enforcing online learning as a response to COVID-19 induced learning challenges. This strategy ensures that teaching and learning continue even when school is closed due to an emergency. According to Coman et al. (2020), and Nhongo, and Tshotsho (2021), blended learning combines both face-to-face and online approaches, making it an important strategy for teaching and learning in both normal and emergency situations. Most universities and tertiary institutions have invested on online platforms such as Moodle, Google Classroom, Blackboard, WhatsApp, and MyVista. In a study carried out by Mukomana et al., (2021), most students were not proficient in computer use, did not own electronic devices, faced energy source challenges, and some did not even appreciate the entire essence of online learning. Furthermore, the study found that the lack of an online teaching and learning policy resulted in some authorized users abusing the system. In a separate study involving 358 students, Chakraborty et al (2020) discovered that 74.6 percent of these respondents cited stress and disrupted sleeps due to excessive screen time, while others expressed being more prone to anxiety through online assessments than traditional forms of assessment. Others have expressed fear of losing internet connectivity during lessons and failing to log into online lessons. As a result, this highlights the inability of educational institutions to make a sudden transition from traditional learning methods to entirely online methods. Most institutions initially struggled with a lack of infrastructure and strategies to deal with the impact of COVID-19 on education (Zhang, Wang, Yang, & Wang, 2020; Chakraborty et al., 2020).

According to Ed Tech Hub (2020), long-term and sustainable digital technologies must be adopted for emergencies. In contrast, Nhongo and Tshotsho (2021) advocate for emergency remote teaching strategies in times like COVID-19 lockdowns rather than long-term approaches. The study goes on to say that countries like Zimbabwe, which are facing economic and infrastructure challenges, would benefit more from an emergency remote teaching approach because of its immediate implementation style, which does not necessitate the establishment of new infrastructure but instead makes use of readily available resources.

### *Digital Divide*

Virtual learning necessitates the use of electronic devices such as a computer or smart phone, radio, television, and internet access, as well as the use of online learning platforms. The operation of these devices is dependent on the availability of energy in the form of electricity. The digital divide is not new; it existed prior to the pandemic, but it has been exacerbated by it (Beaunoyer, Dupéré, and Guitton, 2020). Furthermore, according to the Centre for Innovation and Technology (CITE) (2021), Zimbabwe has long-standing issues with effectively dealing with the digital divide, such as dealing with digital infrastructure that caters to rural areas and equitable digital expansion programmes. According to Lembani, Gunter, Breines, and Dalu (2020), students are denied adequate access to

information and communication technology due to the digital divide between urban and rural areas. In the same vein Grishchenko (2020) observed that poor persons and those residing in rural areas typically have inadequate access to digital technologies. Consistent access to digital technologies is required for delivering education online. Students who cannot access to digital technologies and knowledge of technology face difficulties in adapting to online education.

According to the Centre for Innovation and Technology (CITE) (2021), in this pandemic era, educators and learners in urban areas have been able to work from home by conducting virtual lessons and meetings, while those in rural areas have lagged behind. Zimbabwe has struggled to lead the way in technological advancement, including in rural areas. Technological advancements for rural communities are occurring at a slow pace, which has a negative impact on virtual learning during disasters, demonstrating an unpreparedness for this alternative learning strategy. The digital divide is largely defined by the disparity between those who have access to and effectively use information and communication technology (ICT) and those who do not (Tichawangana, 2006). Access does not only imply physical possession of ICTs, but also affordability and the ability to use technology effectively, even for virtual learning, in order to improve one's standard of living.

## **Discussion**

### ***State of Preparedness***

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, global institutions have positively responded by designing and implementing various response strategies to mitigate the disaster's impact in various sectors of the states. The Zimbabwean government is commended for all of its response strategies, including the Education Sector COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Strategy, which focuses on ensuring learning continuity through the provision of programmes on radios, digital and online platforms, and the dispersal of supplementary learning resources, among other strategic priorities (Zimbabwe Education Cluster, 2020). Education UN agencies, universal NGOs, as well as countrywide NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) were identified and incorporated into the strategy as supportive Cluster partners (UNICEF, 2020). Disaster legislation in Zimbabwe is governed by the Civil Protection Act of 1989 (Chapter 10:06), which was enacted by the Government of Zimbabwe and directs all disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities in the country (Government of Zimbabwe, 1989). This act requires a systematic evaluation to determine its relevance with disaster dynamics on a national and global scale, in order to fully meet the demands of COVID-19 disaster in reducing vulnerability and building resilience among communities.

Zimbabwe's disaster legislation has a number of flaws that must be addressed in order for it to meet international best practices. Measures focused on are reactive rather than proactive (Ahmed 2013), which will accommodate community involvement at the grassroots level, particularly in multi-sectorial interventions, as noted in the Education cluster response to COVID-19. The disaster legislation has restricted community participation in DRR programs. The Civil Protection Act of 1989 was revised in 1992 and 2001, but the framework did not include vulnerability reduction and community resilience (Manyena 2012), which are important factors in reducing community susceptibility to disasters and enabling communities to resist, engross, accommodate, and recuperate from disaster effects (Mavhura, 2016). As previously stated, in terms of virtual learning, responding to the pandemic by addressing vulnerable communities such as learners with

disabilities as well as orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) is critical in the teaching and learning process so that no learner is left behind.

Another significant challenge with Zimbabwe's disaster legislation is the lack of clarity in the funding amounts set aside by the government in its annual budget for DRR activities. Before seeking external assistance, the government must set aside funds for disasters, including those with a sudden onset, such as COVID-19. To name a few, virtual learning necessitates funding for the creation of online platforms, the use of radio and television channels for student lessons, the subsidization of data for learners to facilitate access to online lessons, and the protection of learners' safety and continuity of learning.

### *Analysis on Alternative Learning Approaches*

The Education sector COVID-19 preparedness and response strategy for a large number of children consists of three approaches, which are as follows:

- Use of radio to broadcast lessons and educational programs
- Online and digital resource provision; and - Broadcasting of additional learning resources such as textbooks, modules and workbooks (UNICEF, 2020).

These approaches were developed in an attempt to address the digital divide in the education sector. Learning has occurred in areas where resources for utilizing these platforms are readily available and accessible. Radios, televisions, mobile phones, and computers are the most commonly used devices for virtual learning. According to a Barometer (2020) survey, the following devices were owned by 87 percent of Zimbabweans in 2018: mobile phones, 61 percent of radios, 36 percent of televisions, and 15 percent of computers. Learners have greater access to mobile phones and radio for virtual teaching and learning, whereas television and computers have less accessibility and are not ideal for learning that should include every learner in the country. During the pandemic, WhatsApp was widely used in the teaching and learning process via mobile phones. Learners, teachers, and parents/guardians communicated via voice notes and text messages about their students' assignments. This necessitates a great deal of supervision and assistance from the learner at home, and most primary school students do not have their own mobile phones; instead, they rely on the phones of their parents/guardians. This is a difficult situation for the parent because some are working and do not have the energy or time to go over homework with the learner. In some cases, the work sent to the students was unclear, requiring the parent to contact the teacher for clarification, which takes time and resources (Mukute, Francis, Burt and De Souza, 2020).

The exorbitant cost of data, a lack of power supply, erratic connectivity, and having a phone that supports WhatsApp are additional challenges with this mode of learning. While e-Learning is the trend learners in the Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phase are excluded by virtue of their inability to use electronic devices. The concept of "no child left behind" is lost when using WhatsApp because connectivity to WhatsApp is difficult for most rural learners, and this mode would not be appropriate at all. While the radio has the advantage of wide coverage and ease of use, it is not suitable for all students. Several rural learners may lose radio connectivity due to a lack of electricity or batteries, as well as a lack of local channels in rural areas near the Botswana and South African borders, where they instead have access to neighboring countries' channels. This mode of learning is inaccessible to students with hearing impairment.

Prior to the pandemic, a number of higher education institutions had been exposed to virtual learning environments, allowing them to continue learning with minimal disruption. In other cases, institutions primarily provide synchronous video conferencing lessons to their students via Google Classroom, Moodle, Zoom, or other platforms. However, not all

students have access to these lessons due to a lack of data, a poor network and connectivity, a lack of electricity, and a lack of compatible smart phones with the programmes used (EdTech, 2020). Another issue that educators face when using platforms like Google Classroom is inconsistency in learner attendance and having some learners exit the online class before the end of the lesson, missing out on important learning materials. More than three-quarters of the class may exist the lesson prior to its closure for reasons such as data loss, not being their favorite lesson, difficult lesson, or boring lesson (Mukute et al, 2020). These platforms fall short of meeting the diverse needs of individual learners. As previously stated, online lessons can attract cyberbullying, with other students disrupting the lessons through inappropriate chat messaging. Such behaviours frustrate both learners and educators, causing stress and anxiety as they fail to adapt to the new normal and complete the intended curriculum implementation (Mukute et al, 2020).

The threats to virtual learning in Zimbabwe and beyond appear to be insufficient electrical energy supply, low Internet connectivity, exorbitant data costs, and an urban-rural digital divide, which would put masses of students behind in meeting their educational goals (Moyo-Nyede and Ndoma (2010) This is demonstrated by the poor performance of students who took national exams in 2020. At the national level, the Grade 7 pass rate in 2020 was 37,11 percent, which is 9,79 percent lower than the result in 2019, which was 46,9 percent. (Muza Mpofo, My Zimbabwe News, 6 February 2021) The pandemic has not yet subsided, and there is a need to evaluate learning approaches in order to achieve better academic results.

Founded on the preceding critical analysis of educational readiness for virtual teaching and learning during COVID-19 lockdowns, as well as the implications for policy innovation, the following recommendations are encouraged:

- Zimbabwe's disaster legislation should undergo a paradigm shift from the hazard paradigm to the susceptibility and resilience paradigm, in accordance with global best practices.
- A clear national ICT policy that specifies regulations for implementing new strategies.
- An intensified and equitable rural electrification scheme must be implemented to allow for uninterrupted online teaching and learning.
- Enhancement of ICT competencies for all users to make effective use of technological gadgets.
- Identifying cooperating partners capable of mobilizing resources and fostering strategies to ensure that no child falls behind.
- Policymakers should be educated in order to design operative and effectual crisis readiness and response policies.
- Establish platforms for psychosocial support in the aftermath of the pandemic.
- Strengthening the policy on alternative or e-learning
- Increasing teachers' capacity to deliver alternative learning approaches during emergencies; and • Expanding the resource base for learning materials to fully accommodate disabled learners, orphans, and vulnerable children.
- Modify content creation to align with virtual learning approaches, such as the Flipped Classroom concept.

## **CONCLUSION**

Conclusively, the study settles that a number of learners missed their lessons as a result of the spontaneous lockdown that resulted in the closure of all learning institutions because the learning was mostly trial and error. The above discourse also reveals the importance of

constant evaluation of educational strategies towards minimizing loss of learning during COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. As a result, the education sector must devise contingency tactics that can be implemented in the event of an emergency. The study also concludes that inequalities in the education sector in Zimbabwe are a source of concern that must be addressed as soon as possible. Electrification and network coverage are a cause for concern that cannot be underrated. Despite the “No child left out” policy well known to all institutions; children are left in the cold due to prevailing circumstances that need the collaboration of all stakeholders.

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