

Madagascar's Responses to the COVID-19 Outbreak: Educational Perspectives from March to June 2020

by

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Abstract

In the 2020s semesters, education has been interrupted a lot by the COVID-19. According to UNESCO² (2020), “nationwide closings affect more than 60% of the world's student population. Overall nations have constantly sought solutions to better maintain the continuation of education as nearly 40% of schools have reopened at present”. In March, the pandemic has entered the territory of Madagascar and impacted school closures in the nation. Interview questionnaires with around fifty respondents from the basic educational establishments were involved in this research to learn more about the impacts of the pandemic in the educational sectors. The findings of this study determined the national government has adopted various strategies to maintain its education such as teaching through national television broadcasts, distribution of books to promote self-taught, giving support to non-subsidized teachers, and provide homework to students to maintain their skills. Madagascar has discovered the COVID-organics which is nationally estimated by the government of Madagascar as a curative and preventive remedy. The government has decided to resume its schools merely for students who are under the state examinations, namely CEPE,³ BEPC,⁴ and Bacca-laureate level, naturally with strong sanitary measures. This research recommends that the government need seriously reshaping its current structure of decentralization into full decentralization to have a transparent distribution of resources at the provincial and regional levels. It proposes to the school leaders to strengthen their collaboration with parents, and sensitize and motivate each parent to support and evaluate the study of their children amid the pandemic and the out-school.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Madagascar, Teaching Disruption

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Introduction:

Education plays a decisive role in the country's growth (Neamtu, 2015) and sustainable development (Little & Green, 2009). As UNESCO (2014) states in its 2014-2021 education strategy, "good quality education and learning become even more important determinants of individual well-being, country progress, and the quality of the common future of humanity" (UNESCO, 2014). Supporting the continuation of education is progressively the common concern of every country at this challenging moment (Reimers et al., 2020). On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) has announced the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) as a global concern, "a pandemic" (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). At the present time, it is believed that the COVID-19, coronavirus, masks, quarantine, asymptomatic, social distance, and among others have become the most popular terms that hunting this planet (Erica K. Brockmeier, 2020). During the first semester of 2020, the overall pedagogics got influenced by this phenomenon (Onyema et al., 2020). However, states, state education agencies, local education agencies, institutions, and others around the world are gradually looking for solutions both financially and technically to advance education during the crisis of coronavirus (Lexi Anderson, 2020).

In December 2019, Wuhan, in Hubei province, and after its expansion through China, was the first country to fight the disease, namely "Coronavirus COVID-19" (Zu et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the Chinese government did take reasonable measures to control the spread of the virus (Lin et al., 2020), even considered as a model of references for their technical approaches to overcome the pandemic (AITakarli, 2020), and also took mature countermeasures for educational continuation (Zhang et al., 2020). On the other hand, Taiwan, Japan, Germany, Singapore, and others have also implemented comprehensive measures in response to the disruption of education (Guthrie et al., 2020), some have continued their traditional education with health control, while others are moving towards distance learning. Literature shows that access to digital learning is difficult in the fragile areas, in the case of African continents where the Internet is costly, and almost African families live together in a house, which is very difficult to focus on. e-learning (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020).

Despite the various adapted frames, yet, not going to school still have huge negative impacts on students whether physically or mentally (Geon Ho Bahn, 2020; Ghosh et al., 2020), particularly for those who are going to take the state exams within this year as well as teachers (UNESCO, 2020; Sintema, 2020). According to UNESCO, "nationwide closings affect more than 60% of the world's student population. Several other countries have implemented localized closings affecting millions of additional learners". "The COVID-19 pandemic is causing an education crisis that could have devastating effects on children in developing countries. "If we do not act now to support education systems, millions of vulnerable children, especially the poorest girls, may not be able to resume their studies once the crisis is over," said Julia Gillard, Chairman of the Board of the Partenariat Mondial of Education.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic started to impact nearly all countries in Africa (Martinez-Alvarez et al., 2020), and Madagascar is no exception (Narison, 2020). On March 21th, 2020, the capital of Madagascar, Antananarivo is firstly affected by the pandemic (Narison, 2020). In response to the pandemic prevention, as well as to combat the viral outbreak, the president of Madagascar Andry Nirina RAJOELINA, on the exact day of March 21th in 2020, announced the suspension of the school and university closures, travel confinements, and bans on the massive gatherings (Narison, 2020). Although the measures endorsed are for good intentions, but it resulted in great impacts on the socio-economy inside the country (Narison, 2020). Naturally, the suspension of the school teaching has large impacts on children, particularly the students who are

going to have the national state examination such as CEPE, BEPC, and the Baccalaureate (Anja, 2020b) and impact also vulnerable parents with lower living conditions. As the Ministry of Education National Technique and Professional revealed that “the objective for this academic year remains the same that is to ensure that there is no white year for this 2019-2020 school year.” Typically, the ministry set up a production studio to ensure the production of programs broadcast on the national channel and certain private channels.

This study advocates the government to strengthen collaboration between schools and parents to facilitate the supervision of children's home learning and to sensitize each parent to support the education of their children during school closure, in particular, while at home, helping or assessing what they know and what I don't know, and looking for a solution to the challenges.

Although Madagascar's low technology capacity (Elysette, 2015), changing physical learning to digital learning will be beyond the possible, yet it is believed that nothing is impossible.

The Structure of Madagascar Education:

Geographically, the Republic of Madagascar is an island country in the Indian Ocean, situated in Southeast Africa, and about 400 kilometers off the coast of East Africa. Madagascar is the world's fourth-largest island country and is a biodiversity hotspot, in which over 90% of wildlife is discovered there than anywhere else on Earth (Mario et al., 2020). The people from Madagascar are called “Malagasy”, thus, Malagasy and French are the languages are most spoken within the country (Country studies, n.d.; Véronique, 2010). According to UNESCO's report, in 2020, “the nation has 27691019 population. Nearly 42.5% of the population is younger than 15 years of age, while 54.5% are between the ages of 15 and 64. Those aged 65 and older form 3% of the total population.”

Educationally, Madagascar was colonized by France country in 1896 to the 1960 year, (Rosnes, 2017) the nation since then had followed the same education system and programs as in French, also using the French language as a teaching instruction language (Rosnes & Rakotoanosy, 2016). After the colonial era in 1960, the same educational programs, the same curriculum prevail in the system (Rosnes & Rakotoanosy, 2016). The education system of Madagascar has suffered consecutive coups that have hindered the country from developing economically and educationally (Trudell, 2016), which also given rise to many educational reforms (Venart & Reuter, 2014), such as the Frenchization⁵ reform, Malagasyzation⁶ reform (Rosnes, 2017; Andrianintsilavo et al., 2012), and the borrowed policy the Bologna Process, the LMD⁷ system in tertiary education (Woldegiorgis, 2018) (MESupRes, 2014).

Education is compulsory for children aged six to fourteen. It is structured as primary education is aimed at children aged 6 and 11. At the end of primary school, pupils can receive a CEPE certificate if he/she passes the state exam, which is required when entering the next class which is secondary education. Also for junior secondary, students aged 12 to 15, the study lasts within four years, and receive a certificate after passing the state exam which is BEPC. Similarly, for senior secondary, pupils aged 16 to 18 with three years of schooling, which is the last year of basic national schools in Madagascar, and where pupils receive a baccalaureate or a high school diploma, this which is very compulsory to enter university. Then, a vocational secondary education

⁵It means transforming education (system, instruction, culture, practice, and among others) in French

⁶Malagasyzation means harmonizing the content and the system of education with the imperatives of the Revolution, that is to say, the building of a socialist and truly Malagasy state.

⁷Licence-Master-Doctorat

system, the vocational college, is the equivalent of junior secondary level; the college technique (technical college), which delivers the baccalaureate technique (technical diploma), is the equivalent of the senior level (Wild Madagascar, 1994; Wikipedia, 2017).

Evidence from the Ministry of Nation Education, from 2010 until now, Madagascar has 9498 public establishments including the preschool centers in every twenty-four regions existing in the country. At the institutional level, Madagascar has six public universities three institutions under the supervision of the accountable ministry, and 175 private authorized universities. Each college, university, polytechnics have various typical major programs (MENsupRes,⁸ 2018).

Despite the economic instability in the country (Trudell, 2016), the trend of the living costs, shortage of teachers in all the educational level, the challenges of lack of systematic teacher evaluation, incentive, poor infrastructures, insufficient classrooms, poor technologies especially in education (Wills et al., 2014; Ramanase et al., 2012). However, the government is constantly looking for ways to enhance both education (Marc, 2004) and all required materials for education such as textbooks, modern books in the physical library, the digital library which almost all university is enjoying its existence at present, classrooms, give create more opportunities for youth (UNESCO, 2015), and develop strategical plan solving internet issues, particularly from 2009 where the tertiary education system was reformed as Bachelor-Masters-Doctorate in all public universities in Madagascar (Rakotonirina & Raoelson, 2018).

Realities in the Country:

As several studies affirm that education and human capital are key criteria that determining a country's well-being (Neamtu, 2015), which is almost neglect by certain countries and such a case is still prevailing in Madagascar. According to the World Bank, "Madagascar has 27,249,564 inhabitants (2020) of which 75% of the population lives on less than \$ 1.90 per day." The FRED (economic date) in 2017, reveals that the human capital in Madagascar was 1.71, which is very low comparing to other countries, also need much consideration in order to reach effective outcomes. Up to this point, the Madagascar government is one of the countries low invest in the education sector which was only 3.23% in 2018 (World Bank, 2020); on another side, at present only 0.14% for scientific research investment (Hayward & Rasoanampoizina, 2015). In March 2020, the World Bank "approved a program loan in support of public development policy of \$ 100 million to support the investments of the Malagasy state in human capital.

The objective of this financing is to 'improving human resources in the health and education sectors, ensuring the availability of budgetary resources from the social sectors and strengthening the legal protection of women and children" (The World Bank, 2020). As Peter Holland, team leader for this operation at the World Bank explains, "The human and financial resources with which they operate are the two most important elements for schools and health centers in Madagascar." "The government has launched major reforms on the training and selection of teachers and health professionals. These are important first steps to invest in the future of Madagascar's human capital." He said.

Also, Marie-Chantal Uwanyiligira, head of operations for the World Bank for Madagascar said that "the greatest wealth of Madagascar is its people. For this reason, the government has expressed its strong desire to advance the reforms in favor of its human capital by including them

⁸Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research)

in its Emergence Plan”. “By supporting the government's will to invest in people, this budget support aims to reverse the worrying trend in poverty.”

It is believed by numerous studies that investing in education is highly crucial to the well-functioning of its achievement (The World Bank Group, 2011), as it is not only based on teaching or learning, but also depends on the various components such as skilled teachers, professional development, performance-based assessment, personalization, collaboration planning, scientific research, innovation, laboratories, technology, and among others to be effectively attained, which is nearly underestimated by the government (Elysette, 2015).

What’s more depressing is that such low expenditures cited above are far sufficient to manage and fulfill the needs of its realization (Government of Madagascar, World Bank & UNICEF⁹, 2015; Hayward & Rasoanampoizina, 2015). Next, the government does not give so much attention to the important part of the frame that is “incentive” which is essentially required to the quality innovation growth (Elysette, 2015).

Apart from that, in 2019, Madagascar faced a shortage of teachers while prevailing until now, while, the number of student enrollment is typically increasing, specifically, this fact results lacks of supervision/ assessment given to students (Venart & Reuter, 2014). Unfortunately, no prompt solving plan has been taken to overcome the challenges which engender the quality of education and the quality of governance in the country (Elysette, 2015).

Empirical analysis asserts that being decentralized but not yet applied is the foremost reason for its non-development which produces corruption and unbalance within the country; following lacks of long-term innovative vision, transparency, ethical professionalism and lacks of the immediate action is a serious weakness within the country.

Introduction of COVID-19 pandemic:

The COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that is spreading globally(Guo et al., 2020), and had become a” pandemic” and “national emergency” (Ma et al., 2020). The coronavirus disease 2019 which is also called the COVID-19 outbreak, which considered begun in the Hubei province, China in 2019, has presently expanded to entire continents(Palacios Cruz et al., 2020), touching 177 countries by March 27, 2020 (Martinez-Alvarez et al., 2020). It has entered the territory of Madagascar in March (Stephan, 2020).

The Objectives of the Study:

The main objective of this study is to examine and analyze the impacts of the COVID-19 in Madagascar basic national education by:

- i. Strengthening collaboration with school directors and parents, and be ascertain parent’s involvement as a pivotal to maintain and boost children’ learning skills during the school closure;
- ii. Restructuring the current decentralization system in the country into full decentralization to effectively respond to the needs of each sector;
- iii. Considering what other countries have done to maintain its education by using a plastic partition to the tabletop desk shield as security measures in the class with students who are back to school;

⁹United Nations Children's Fund

- iv. Rejuvenating the ICTs, connectivity capacity within the country if such circumstance will happen in the future.

The Significance of the Study:

This research is important as it serves as a tool for the government to reformulate and regularize its current decentralization into a system of total decentralization in the education sector as decentralization will bring productivity to the results of education and beyond, and will bring transparency in the management of education, will also bring more competitiveness within schools, teachers, non-teaching staff, and students.

Likewise, this study is essential as an instrument to harden the existence of parents in the education of children in Madagascar. Besides, this research will be used as a mechanism to seriously consider the use of plastic partitions for learners who are now back in schools to ensure their safety in the classroom.

Research questions:

This study points out the following questions:

- i. What might be the impacts of the pandemic on Madagascar's education?
- ii. What are the impacts of school closures on national education in Madagascar?
- iii. How does the Malagasy government maintain educational activities during the COVID-19?
- iv. What are the measures adopted to resume schools?

Methodology:

This study conducted interview questionnaires in reason to know more about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in Madagascar educational sectors, and its impacts on students learning 'skills. In total, this study has fifty respondents comprise teachers, parents, and students (from the national basic education establishments).

Results:

Impacts of the Teaching Distuption on the Madagascar National Basic Education:

Education is a key development for a country (Elizabeth M. King, 2011; Johan & Harlan, 2014). As UNESCO demonstrated (2011), "education is a fundamental right to any individual in the whole world". Habitually, school is the right place to obtain a formal education and quality instructions (Tudor, 2013). However, maintaining the long-term quality of education from generation to generation is the main concern of all countries/parents (Webb, 2009; Kleickmann et al., 2013), which often involves the obligation to send children to school and often thinks that if children don't go to school they will know anything (Sage, 1875). This indeed is not entirely accurate. Since the 1960s, non-formal education has been part of the education(Ivanova, 2016). As the philosopher, John Dewy quoted "we can get education from everywhere at any time."

Underling the out-school learning or/and homeschooling (Nur Icmi & Suryono, 2019) (Goldstein, 2013) is more than ever demanded in the current circumstances of the COVID-19, which have resulted in school closures and disturbed the pedagogical activities globally (Plowman

et al., 2012; Tudor, 2013). As UNESCO quoted, “nationwide closings affect more than 60% of the world's student population. Several other countries have implemented localized closings affecting millions of additional learners”. They also report that “119 countries have closed schools nationwide since the COVID-19 epidemic, disrupting learning and education for an estimated 897 million students, and much more millions could be affected.”

According to the World Bank (2019), “Madagascar has 27 249 564 habitants (2020) which 75% of the population are living on less than \$1.90 per day...”. Given that Madagascar is poor in connectivity and costly (Rabefaritra et al., 2019) that everyone could not afford to have a computer, a tablet, or a high-speed telephone to go to digital learning, as 75% of the population is living below the poverty line (The World Bank, 2019; RakotonDRAMARO & ANDRIAMASY, 2016). Evidence shows that after the pandemic hit Madagascar, immediately the President of Madagascar, Andry Nirina Rajoelina took various measures to prevent the spread of the virus by closing all schools in the country's twenty-two regions (Anja, 2020a), also restricted all workers, whether working in the state office or a private company (Stephan, 2020).

As a result, the current pandemic will impact school drop out during or after all is back to normal (Anja, 2020a), the responsible ministry continually demands that parents pay school fees despite the impossibility of going to school. It is witnessed that the contractual or the non-subsidized teachers are among the victims of the pandemic, as their monthly income is charged from the number of times or hour they teach, which suddenly suspended by the existing crisis. Thus, the 56,250 non-subsidized teachers will benefit special aids from the concerned ministry (Anja, 2020a).

Unfortunately, actually, in Madagascar, cities continue to be locked down because of the impacts of this COVID-19. Indeed, that continues to affect several sectors as education, economy, social health, security, and others. Although the measures adopted are aimed at the well-being of citizens, they have nevertheless had serious repercussions on the education sector, as the country is not yet economically and technologically advanced. And for that, the transition to online education may be beyond the impossible.

Amid the pandemic, in May, schools resumed specifically for students who will undergo the state exams and it will only be organized in the morning with health measures (i.e. check-in temperature, the distribution of masks, the water and soap supplies in the weak areas, the distribution of COVID-organics (Heidi, 2020), By doing that, the government trained all responsible leaders and teachers to get ready to welcome back learners with health prevention. Likewise, during the same month, the junior secondary students carried out the BEPC exam tests. On June 2, the responsible government selected the last subject of the CEPE, BEPC exams. Despite government efforts to avoid the White Years (Anja, 2020a), controversial views have therefore been discovered.

The Measures Implemented by the Government to Maintain its Teaching:

The Ministry of Education Nationale Technique and Professional revealed that “the objective for this academic year remains the same that is to ensure that there is no white year for this 2019-2020 school year”. To do so, various measures have been adopted to continue teaching, for instance, different channels (radio, television, digital, etc.) were inquired to advance teaching and to facilitate sensitization on the disease. 720 radio and television broadcasts covering all levels for the 2019-2020 school year, and a further 660 for the 2020-2021 school year are scheduled to be broadcast. Typically, the ministry set up a production studio to ensure the production of programs broadcast on the national channel and certain private channels.

The finding of this research revealed that started from April 8, the government, specifically the responsible ministry of education (MoE) has decided to implement the “Kilasy pour Tous” in Malagasy, as “Education for all” in English, broadcast by the national Malagasy television (TVM). This program has three main aims that are “to maintain all learners’ education skills-alternative-entertainment,” which the first round begins from nine in the morning and its rerun from three in the afternoon,. Next, the program comprises teaching maths, algebra, life earth and science, Malagasy, French.

In so far, the program has been successfully implemented; but several arguments are yet discovered about the adopted countermeasures. According to participants “the Kilasy pour tous seems far from practicable, conducive to the dissimilar levels of students because until now, we are not informed whether the program is mainly for whom, particularly for which level of students, primary or secondary or university students as it refers as education for all”. However, specify by respondents (15), (20), (2) and (23) that “ the outline of the direct teaching program which is the daily outline needs to be more detailed in order to make children more ready and prepared to the next class.”

In opposition to the above respondents (4), (8) and (26) “we are satisfied with the program as it is in line with our children learning level.” In other side, participants (1), (19), (33) and (37) rate as “unsatisfied as the direct teaching program only uses the Malagasy language to teach; and suggest using both French and Malagasy to well sustain children's ability, besides, we need to boost learners’ French ability for their future studies.” Hereby, in contradiction to the above respondents (30), (6), (9) and (40) which demonstrate their ideas as “the teacher uses the French language in the school to explain lessons, and to interact with children in the school environment, and only uses Malagasy while class break times, they suggested, it would be better if still proceeding with the same techniques.”

Yet, several respondents like respondent (50), (45), (28), (43), (35), (32) and (36) validate as “we find it practical as not all students can express themselves in French language and understand the language, particularly for the public school students which all time uses the Malagasy language for teaching instructions”. Some participants have recommended the concerned ministry to separately use both languages, for instance, “use the Malagasy language in the first morning round, and the French language for the second afternoon round to effectively answer citizens' worries, and also to make the distance learning more propitious for every student.”

Apart from that, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has meanwhile encouraged all those in charge of educational establishments, public or private, region by region, to provide homework to students, including homework collection is organized according to the level of the class (Figure 1), parents or one of the family members may go to their child's school and collect the homework from the teacher responsible according to the time indicated and sign a certain paper to well manage the situation, then after a week, bring the finished homework back to school and correct it by the teacher, then collect the new one as usual.

According to UNESCO (2020), nearly 40% of schools have reopened at present. On April 19, 2020, after the discovery, the so-called “Tambavy,” and particularly to avoid white year, the president of the Republic of Madagascar, Andry Nirina Rajoelina announced the opening of schools only for students in exam class (i.e., senior primary level, junior secondary level, and final senior secondary), and strongly followed by global prevention of the pandemic. In doing so, the class reopening is scheduled as partly attended or only conducted in the half-day morning, obviously with strong precaution as the MoE has trained its members nationally and regionally on what should be done before, during, and after the school resumption. For instance, before the

resumption of school in the country, all staff under MoE’s tutelage are required to ensure the safety of students, sanitation of the school by:

- i. Disinfecting schools corner by corner;
- ii. Putting hand sanitizers in each office, classrooms;
- iii. Sufficiently supply water and soap (Figure 2) in the school to frequently wash hand;
- iv. Distribute masks and the CVO¹⁰ (Figure 3) to each individual;
- v. Strictly ensuring the physical distance (Figure 5)

FILAZANA

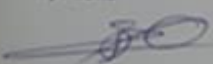
Antsoina isika Ray amandrenin'ny mpianatra na solontena ato amin'ny Lycée Privé Stella Maris mba ho tonga ahy an' tsakofo ny Talata 30/06/2020 izao haka ireo "Devoirs" .

Tsy izao manarak'izao ireo fandaharam-potoana mahakasika izany fizarana izany:

Classes	DEBUT	FIN
6ème	08h30	09h00
5ème	09h00	09h30
4ème	09h30	10h00
3ème	10h00	10h30
2nd	10h30	11h00
PL et PS	11h00	11h30
TA-TC-TD	11h30	12h00
1ère Année FTG	12h00	12h30
2ème Année FTG	12h00	12h30
3ème Année FTG	12h00	12h30

MISAOTRA TOMPOKO !!!!!

VRM STELLA MARIS

Ny Filoha

LEONG Médéric

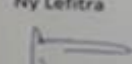
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Figure 1 Schedule of collecting homework at each class¹¹

¹⁰ COVID-Organics

¹¹ Source: Stella Maris Private Highschool’s online platform (2020)



Figure 2: The schools within the country have adapted this preventive measures for sanitation¹²



Figure 3: Distribution of CVO to each student¹³

¹² Source: MENETP (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de l'Enseignement Technique et Professionnel (Ministry of National Education, Technical and Vocational Education) (2020)

¹³ Source: MENETP, 2020



Figure 4: In the Tsiroanomandidy CISCO¹⁴, the senior students (BEPC level) carry out examination essays with medical protection and physical distance in the classroom¹⁵

To better sustain and keep the learning interests of students, the MoE produced the number of 636,000 books called “liberal arts or booklet-essentials” (Figure 5) that financed by UNICEF and distributed those books to students in almost all twenty-two regions in Madagascar that aim to allow and strengthen their self-study. For instance, in Mai 2020, different establishments such as the CEG¹⁶ Ambanitsena, CEG, and EPP¹⁷ Ambohimanga Rova, CEG Ambohitrandriamanjaka, and other establishments have received their shares. It is explained by the responses that these books are intended for grades 6, 7, 8, and 9. The books cover the three main subjects: Malagasy, French, and mathematics. The purpose of the Ministry of National Education and technical and vocational education in producing the books was to complement the knowledge already gained by the students and to nurture and strengthen their memory. These books also include a summary of lessons, exercises, and strategies to test student achievement through practice and correction. The availability of these books will help students to be self-sufficient during this period of crisis as the Ministry of Education and technical and vocational education has announced. As viewed that reading is very fundamental in developing self- knowledge.

¹⁴Circonscription Scolaire (or School District)

¹⁵Source: MENETP, DRENETP (Directeurs Régionaux de l'Éducation Nationale et de l'Enseignement Technique et Professionnel (Regional Directors of National Education and Technical and Vocational Education) Bongolava (2020)

¹⁶Collège d'Enseignement Général (College of General Education)

¹⁷Ecole Primaire Publique (Public Primary School)



Figure 5: Learning materials that the government distribute to students¹⁸



Figure 6: The education staff preparing for the CEPE and BEPC state examination subject¹⁹

¹⁸Source: MENETP, 2020

¹⁹Source: Ministry of National Education, Technical and Professional Education, June 2020

The final selection of subjects for the CEPE 2020 national exams was held on Tuesday 02 June 2020, at the Ministry of National Education and Technical and Technical Education, Anosy (Figure 6). It was adapted to the curriculum that each student was able to complete. Representatives of private and public Analamanga teachers and “Educational Councils” worked together, due to DRENETEP's inability to attend, in the face of health emergencies.

Recommendations and Suggestions of The Study:

i. The Role of Parents in Children’s Learning Amid the School Closures

Outside schooling time, as we are all aware that assessment and support coming from parents or families toward children's study are very crucial to refresh their educational minds, raise their skills, especially during this kind of situation. As Bjorklund and Salavane (2011) specified, “families are central to education and are widely agreed to provide major inputs into a child’s learning”. However, in response to maintain children's learning ability, as well as regaining their interest in learning, parent's involvement plays a decisive role in their education.

In other hands, during this lockdown may be useful for certain parents (busy with full schedule) to strengthen the relationship between parents and children, which also constructive to observe attentively the learning level of the children, analyzing where is the source of their educational difficulties; what lacks in their learning equipment; how to boost their study and others. Up to the same point, being at home in this hard time might be a good sign for parents-children’ relationship, as some parents are busy all the time with work, now is the right way to assess children’s learning (writing and reading competences). For instance, evaluating what they have done (lessons in each course) during the past academic years, what difficulties are they encountering with studies, then help or instruct them carefully. Another instance, at this point, parents can complement a child's math learning by counting math problems in everyday life and lighting up history or geography lessons to reinforce their skills. However, parental participation in supporting child learning by assessing their education and seeking to solve their learning difficulties and develop an enriching home environment is linked to children’s academic performance (Sheridan et al., 2010). However, the practice of parents' participation as they are the people with the most inclusive opportunities to promote children's learning (Ceka & Murati, 2016), and develop their self-education (Mahoney & Perales, 2006). On top of that, parents are considered as children’s role models. The more parents are engaged in children's learning, the more children will be motivated to do more in school and learning due to parent-oriented reasons, which will, naturally, improve children's self-regulating learning.

In summary, parental involvement is very vital to encourage and promote the effectiveness of children's learning, especially this time of class suspensions. We may affirm that only parents and/or families can know what their children are facing, what are their needs to sustain, and reacquire their attention with learning right now. Furthermore, parents are at the heart of the child's emotional development, including their social, intellectual, and well-being. As above mentioned, parents can enlarge a child's science ability by counting math problems

in everyday life, physics or chemistry problems, and elucidate history or geography lessons to reinforce their skills. Continuously assess and support them to achieve productive outcomes. Although home-schooling naturally will not replace the learning at school. Yet, now amid the school closures caused by the pandemic, home education directed by parents is practical and effective in supporting and progressing the child's knowledge.

ii. Implementing Decentralization for Long-Term Quality Development

Many studies revealed that the greatest challenges that hinder the development of Madagascar education are its system of the called “decentralization” which is only existing in the state constitution but not yet fully applicable, mainly in the sector of the resources distribution and systematic educational evaluation as a whole (UNICEF, 2013). The practice of fair decentralization as the main way to develop education in Madagascar. The local governments should strengthen the role of regional and district education offices and improve the autonomy of schools in terms of resource management. Therefore, reshaping the educational system into not full decentralization to totally decentralization to promote competitiveness among establishment and any staff nationally and beyond. Also, restructuring it may yield various Change in the system itself, as it can be employed as a tool to deeply identify the challenges in the weak areas in terms of schooling equipment, financial resources, issues with teachers, non-teaching staff, and others.

iii. Lessons From Other Countries to School Resumption

In recent months, finding the means to further education or teaching is the main concern of any country. However, some developed countries such as China, the United States, and others have steadily maintained their educational activities due to the existing solid technologies they possess and are easily transitioning to digital learning. On this point, Denmark, Japan, Germany, Norway, and others resumed their education by reopening schools around April in the middle of the pandemic with strong sanitary measures (Wiley, 2020). Moreover, Melissa Wiley (2020) reveals as evidence that “in Taiwan, schools were never officially closed, but simply extended the winter break in the ten days of February to disinfect educational facilities, distribute medical supplies and implementing new procedures for schools with confirmed cases of coronavirus. Schools have also used plastic tabletop desk partitions as an additional safety measure, which is handy when planning to resume school.”

This manner encourages local or regional authorities in Madagascar to learn from other countries such as Taiwan, South Korean, South Africa, and others by using “plastic partitions” around the table of each student to maintain social distance and prevent the spread of saliva (Figure 7). Certainly continuing the health regulations in force in the country, namely the daily temperature check, the constant wearing of masks and frequent hand washing, maintaining social distance, regular consumption of CVO, and most essential is to keep an eye on student safety.



Figure 7: In South Korea, employing plastic partitions at each table of students for safety measures (Edex Live)²⁰

Conclusion:

The education system in Madagascar has never faced such a long interruption in education and has not been trained to cope with such stops imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This phenomenal pandemic has spoiled every schooling program this year. It has transformed the overall thinking of any nationwide governments to value the e-class and has given vitality to the weak countries to give the prominence of technologies. This critical situation has inspired the leaders to give maximum importance of benchmarking, especially about education maintenance amid the pandemic. Also, it strengthened cooperation nationally and internationally, intrigued leaders to learn, and share views from each other. Additionally, it served as a drive to waken up the government of Madagascar on valuing the most important part to develop a country which is “education, the health of citizens, safety and transparency.” Moreover, the existing pandemic has toughened the collaboration among each individual in a society.

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²⁰ Source: <https://www.edexlive.com/news/2020/may/20/covid-19-pandemic-south-koreans-return-to-school-amid-virus-outbreak-12135.html>

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