



Research Article

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## An Essencist Evaluation of Socio-Economic Impacts of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*There is a tripartite global crises of social, economic and health unlike any in the past almost eight decades history of the United Nations that is fast killing people, increasing and spreading human woes and sufferings with an unending existential calamities. This is indeed, beyond health, economic and social crises. It is evidently human existential crises that have the potency and potential to bring about existential eclipse of the human race. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is wreaking havoc on societies at their core. With the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reassessment of the prospect for growth for 2020 and 2021, and the declaration that there is a global recession that is as bad as or even worse than the 2009 situation, Nigeria socio-economic survival is at risk. The only hope of any recovery in 2021 is if the country succeeds in containing the pandemic and take sound and necessary economic decisions and measures. The only roadmap for the socio-economic survival of the country will depend on the proactive management approaches, health policy framework and leadership that will comprehensively address the several social conditions that have to do with health education and literacy level, both nationally and internationally in the areas of economic stimulus that will demand both government and citizens partnerships and the constitution of National Technical Committee on Coronavirus (NTCC) that will relate with a global technical body. The efficient execution of these policy and ideas will certainly demand the total cooperation of all strata of the society, which will include governmental agencies, information experts, civil societies, health experts, educationists and the citizens. What the paper therefore advocates is a multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches anchored on a sound philosophy through the educational process towards overcoming this 21st century invisible monster. Our approach in this paper will be a combination of analysis and philosophical evidential speculation, which will inspire creativity that will match the novel nature of the crisis.*

**Keywords:** Essencist Evaluation, Socio-Economic Impact, Disease, COVID-19, Nigeria

## 1. Introduction

Scientifically and medically, the coronavirus is a disease referred to as COVID-19 that affects the respiratory system, which is triggered by a new virus, known as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which was discovered in December, 2019 for the first time in Wuhan, which is a city in China ( Gentile and Abenavoli, 2020; Shan, and Roa, 2020). The signs or symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, coughing, sneezing, sore throat, fatigue, shortness of breath, blisters on the back of the palm, loss of senses of smell and taste. There exists clinical evidence to show that it spreads from one individual to the other, and is highly contagious. This high rate of infection could be prevented through good hygiene such as regular washing of hand with soap, cleaning of domestic surfaces and personal effects with disinfectant (Chavis and Ganesh 2020; Chen et al, 2020; Deng and Peng, 2020). Keeping a safe distance of at least one meter from people and avoiding high contact areas.

The COVID-19 pandemic has since spread to all continents and countries of the world with six million, one hundred and seventy one thousand, one hundred and eighty two (6,171,182) infected persons; three hundred and seventy two thousand, one hundred and sixteen (312,116) deaths globally with Nigeria recording ten thousand, one hundred and sixty two (10,162) infected cases and two hundred and eighty seven (287) deaths as at 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2020 according to International SOS and Arise News (2020). The World Health Organisation (WHO) report (2020(b)), states that the velocity of “transmission for COVID-19 virus is estimated to be 5-6 days; the reproductive number is said to be between 2 and 2.5; children are less infected than adults, currently; the crude mortality ratio is between 3-4%” (Evans, 2020). There are some therapeutics in clinical trials including three in Nigeria, and over twenty (20) vaccines are in various stages of development but there exists no authorized vaccines or therapeutics as at now.

Several scholars and practitioners in the fields of science have made efforts on the diagnosis, therapeutics and vaccines of the pandemics with little or no success. Also, there have been numerous research findings and articles about the socio-economic impacts on the world. It is a fact that the coronavirus has severe consequences on various aspects of human existence. Although these works has brought about several insights into the pandemics, but the quantum of the nature of the research makes it almost impossible to actually identify and comprehend the basic facts, findings and the lessons. In this paper therefore, effort is made to analyse and reflect on previous pandemics, the roles of leadership and to suggest policy solutions that are anchored on a philosophy of education that will inspire creativity in tackling pandemic of this nature.

## 2. Nigeria’s Effort at Tackling Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is a serious threat to mankind globally. Countries all over the world have designed and developed measures and strategies at prevention and curbing of its spread. The global measures, strategies and protocols are designed and developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO). These global protocols and strategies at combating the pandemic are products of scientific studies and researches with no finality. However, the WHO guidelines are not an outcome of global statistical and empirical studies but based on the China’s experience, which was where the pandemic started. So countries, were expected to follow these guidelines and adapt them in a customized manner to meet their peculiarities.

However, in Nigeria, there has not been any effort at adaption and customization of the WHO’s guidelines. What the Nigerian Government has done was to set up a Presidential Task Force (PTF) chaired by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), who is a lawyer by profession. Indeed, the composition of the PTF although with the Minister of Health, Minister of Environment, among others, this does not show seriousness of the political leadership of the country to tackle the pandemic. Apart from the Minister of Health, the National Coordinator and the Director General of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) who are medical doctors by profession, the rest are

just political appointees of the President. Therefore, by its composition, the PTF is technically not equipped to carry out the task of tackling the novel pandemic.

The approach of the PTF therefore has been to “copy and paste” the WHO’s guidelines in Nigeria without any effort to adapt and customize them within the context of the country’s socio-cultural values, needs and peculiarities. This is clearly a lack of deep and critical thinking, which is symptomatic of Nigeria’s political leadership. The PTF as presently constituted do not have the technical and knowledge-based competence to tackle this novel pandemic. This is because, there are no scientists (especially in microbiology, which is the core area of competence on viruses), pharmacists, medical scientists, academics (who are core researchers by training) and other professional bodies like Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Nigerian Pharmaceutical Society (NPS), Religious Organizations, Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), etc.

This is anchored on the logic that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) as a novel pandemic requires multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach towards its fight. Again, it has been stated that COVID-19, is an invisible enemy to mankind, so, such an enemy cannot be defeated by only the physical science(s) or political bureaucracy. It is therefore due to the improper composition of the PTF that there is a serious doubt in the minds of most Nigerians as to the reality of COVID-19. There is the idea out there that COVID-19 is a scam in Nigeria. The reason for this lack of trust on the PTF is largely due to the fact that there are no real professionals to effectively communicate the facts and guidelines to the citizenry. This has made it difficult if not impossible for Nigerians to adhere to the guidelines as issued by the PTF, which include:

- i. Regular washing of hands with running water and soap
- ii. Use of hand sanitizer with sixty (60%) percent based alcohol
- iii. Social distancing
- iv. Stay at home order
- v. Compulsory wearing of face masks
- vi. Self-isolation
- vii. Ban on interstate travels
- viii. Closure of schools
- ix. Closure of religious centres
- x. Total lockdown of some states
- xi. No shaking of hands
- xii. Closure of Nigerian borders
- xiii. Suspension of flights, etc.

A critical look at all the guidelines released by the PTF as a means to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic will reveal that all these are imported or copied ideas from WHO and other countries. There is none of these that is indigenous to Nigeria and do not in any way reflect the country’s socio-cultural situation or value. We will pick few of these guidelines and show how these cannot work in Nigeria.

- The regular washing of hands with soap in running water: This is not practicable in Nigeria, which is a country where about ninety-eight percent (98%) homes and houses do not have access to water, and not to talk of running tap water. The Nigerian government have not been taking the issue of water supply to the populace seriously and have not implemented any workable water supply scheme. So the questions is, where will the over 98% Nigerians get running water from? In the country(ies) where this will work, is where every homes or houses have running water. In Nigeria, it is only the political leaders and the privileged few that can afford this luxury of running water in their homes.
- Self-isolation: The idea of self-isolation is certainly not practicable in Nigeria. The reason for this is because the housing situation is such that there are usually more than five or more persons living in a room. So, how will self-isolation be possible in Nigeria where there is a serious inadequacy of housing? This is only a system that can be effective and functional in a society where individualism is a cultural norm. In Nigeria, the cultural pattern or norm is

communalistic in nature. Kano State illustrate this culture recently when the Federal Government ordered total lockdown of Kano immediately the index case was reported and there was an instant spike due to the cultural life style of the people of Kano.

- **Social Distancing:** This is a social guideline in which people do not come into close contact but maintains at least two to three metres away from each other. This is because COVID-19 is very contagious and spread from person to person. The social distancing rule is to help to reduce the spread of the pandemic. However, the Nigerian social and work environments are not designed to meet this social rule. It will be very difficult if not impossible to keep to such a rule in Nigeria. This is not because Nigerians do not keep to rules but because the socio-cultural environment do not permit such. The difficulty in the enforcement of the social distancing rule recently manifested in Lagos, Abuja and Port-Harcourt where there were large crowd in banks and bus stops.
- **Stay-at-Home Order:** The stay-at-home order was designed to prevent social contact of the citizens, and therefore curb the spread of the virus. However, this can only be functional where there is a social security system in place. In Nigeria, majority of the people depend on daily income for survival so it will be extremely difficult if not impossible to keep such a large percentage of the citizens at home without any palliative or social safety nets. Any attempt to force those who entirely depend on daily income for their survival will create other socio-economic problems like what has been described as “hunger-virus” in Nigeria during the total lockdown in Abuja, Lagos and Ogun States. The palliatives that the government was supposed to provide to the people during the lockdown was not just available. There was the problem of the social register and other issues of corruption, diversion, etc on the part of the government and its agencies.
- **Ban on Interstate Travels:** The restriction of interstate travel was aimed at curbing the spread of the coronavirus from one state to the other. However, the various state Governors have been moving from one state to the other despite the interstate traveling ban. This is a clear case of executive lawlessness, which shows that the ban is only for the citizens, and not the Governors who are supposed to lead by example. These Governors are therefore a serious risk factor in the spread of the virus. Their movement all over the place encouraged the citizens to also break the travel ban rule, and continue the spread of the virus. The political system and structure in the country do not support the ban on interstate movement. This is because of the immunity clause provided in the Constitution, which protects and shields the President, Vice President, the Governors and their deputies from all criminal liabilities while in office. Security personnel that were positioned to enforce the ban on interstate travels collect bribe and allow people to pass not minding who has the virus or not. It was almost like a business venture established for them by the Government, and has led to in corruption.

From the above analysis, it evidently clear that the Nigeria’s effort at tackling the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is not a product of deep and critical thinking. Also, there is no evidence of any research(es) carried out in Nigeria by the PTF or instituted by it to know the nature of the virus and the various methods of its spread in the country so as to develop a research-based and knowledge – based approach towards curbing it.

### **3. Origin and Nature of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)**

There are controversies surrounding the origin of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which is said to be novel. The novelty characteristic or status of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) seems to be historical fallacy or inaccuracy. The reason or logic of this is premised and validated on the fact that the coronavirus are large family of viruses that have the potency or potentials to cause illnesses with diverse severity. The very first known and established medical severe illness that was caused by coronavirus was the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic that occurred in China in

2003. Another tranche of this outbreak of severe respiratory disease started in Saudi Arabia in 2012, which is the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). So, it will be a wrong scientific or medical history to describe coronavirus disease (COVID-19) as a novel virus.

However, it could be correct to state that the “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2” (SARS-CoV-2) is a kind of “viral strain” that bring about “coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)”, which is “a respiratory” sickness (Giomo, 2020; Gorbalenya, Baker, Baric, de Groot, Drosten and Gulyaeva, 2020; BBC News, 2020). SARS-CoV-2 is regarded as a “positive-sense single-stranded RNA virus which are classified within the Nidovirales order and Coronaviridae family. The human coronaviruses (HCoVs) are in the “alpha coronaviruses (HCoV-229E and HCoV-NL63) and beta coronaviruses (HCoV-HKU1, HCoV-OC43, Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus [MERS-CoV])” (WHO, 2020). Again the “replication of viral RNA” do takes place inside “the host cytoplasm” through “a unique mechanism in which RNA polymerase binds to a leader sequence and then detaches and reattaches at multiple locations, allowing for the production of a nested set of mRNA molecules with common 3' ends” (WHO, 2020). The virus is very contagious in human beings and WHO has declared it a pandemic (Wee, McNeil and Hernandez, 2020). Due to the fact that the strain was discovered in Wuhan, China first, it is often called “Wuhan Virus” or “Wuhan Coronavirus”, but since WHO does not encourage the use of names on the basis of location, which meant to eradicate any form of confusion with the disease known as SARS it is described as SARS-CoV-2, and it is referred to as “the COVID-19 Virus” in public health circle and communication. This terminology is to provide scientific precision in its understanding.

This new strain of coronavirus according to health experts is likely to have originated in bats or pangolins. Historically, its first transmission to human beings was in Wuhan, China towards the end of December, 2019, when public health officials in China told WHO that they have an unknown health problem, new virus that was causing “pneumonia”, which is kind of illness in Wuhan. It was later discovered that it was a coronavirus and it started spreading through the city and outside it. Scientifically, it has not been conclusively established the source of this new virus but the genetic sequence analysis of the new virus is 96% identical with the coronavirus found in bats that earlier caused SARS and MERS.

Taxonomical study of “SARS-CoV-2” indicates that it is a type of “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome”, which is a linked with “coronavirus” (“SARSr-CoV”) (Gorbalenya, Baker, Baric, de Groot, Drosten and Gulyaeva, et al., 2020). This particular coronavirus is of zoonotic origin that strongly suggests that it came from a “bat-borne virus” (Zhou, Yang, Wang, Hu, Zhang, Zhang, et al., 2020; Perlman, 2020; Benvenuto, Giovanetti, Ciccozzi, Spoto, Angeletti and Ciccozzi, 2020; Shield, 2020).

Epidemiologically, the first reports of cases from Wuhan around December of 2019, was that above “80,000 COVID-19 cases were confirmed in China, and these included “all laboratory-confirmed cases as well as clinically diagnosed cases in the Hubei Province”. The combined team of World Health Organization (WHO) and China that carried out the research suggested that the epidemic in China got to the peak around “late January and early February 2020”. There has been a reported cases of increase in the number of cases in other countries in almost all continents of the world “except Antarctica, and the report of new cases that is outside China has overtook the number in China. The initial cases happened mostly among those that traveled from China and those that have any contact with people that came from China. There has been “smaller outbreaks” that has taken place outside China, and these include countries like South Korea, Italy, Iran, America, United Kingdom, Japan and sub-Saharan Africa inclusive of Nigeria (WHO, 2020). It is estimated that a single infection can lead to between 1.4 to 3.9 new cases especially where the people of the community have no immunity and there are no preventive steps taken to curb its spread. The virus basically spreads between people who are in close contact, and is through respiratory droplets of coughs or sneezes (United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; Letko, Marzi, Munster, 2020). It mostly penetrates human cells by binding to the receptor “angiotensin” and converts to “enzymes” (Perlman, 2020; Hoffman, Kliene-Webber, Kruger, Herrier, Erichen, Schiergens, et al., 2020; Edwards, 2020). The range of human-to-human transmission of SARS-CoV-2

is about 1.8 metres or six feet (Edwards, 2020). The indirect means of transmission is through contaminated surfaces such as plastic and steel for about three days, but will not survive on cardboard for more than twenty four (24) hours, on copper for about four hours and can be inactivated with soap that destabilizes its "lipid bilayer" (Yong, 2020; Gibbens, 2020).

There exists no concrete evidence to certainly establish the degree that the virus could be infectious during the incubation period, but there is research findings to show that the "pharynx" gets to its peak viral load within four days after infection (Kupferschmidt, 2020; WHO, 2020). WHO on February, 2020 showed that transmission from those who do not have the symptoms (that is asymptomatic people) are really not a key factor in the spread of the coronavirus disease (WHO, 2020). Despite this, "an epidemiological model" at the start of this pandemic revealed "pre-symptomatic shedding" as the "actual source of most of the infections" and that subclinical infections may be the actual source of most of the infections. (Li, Pei, Chen, Song, Zhang, Yang, et al. 2020).

Scientific findings about "the natural reservoir of the virus strain" led to "the 2002-2004 SARS outbreak" that resulted in "the discovery" of several "SARS-like bat" coronavirus, with majority of them emerging from the "*Rhinolophus* genus of horseshoe bats, and two viral nucleic acid sequences found in samples taken from *Rhinolophus sinicus* show a resemblance of 80% to SARS-CoV-2" (NCBI, 2020). It has been scientifically established that bats are the "most likely natural reservoir of SARS-CoV-2" (NCBI, 2020; WHO 2020) but there are differences that exists between the bat coronavirus and SARS-CoV-2, which indicate that human beings were infected through an intermediate host (Cryanoski, 2020). It has been reported that the virus genome has "a novel lineage for almost half of its genome, with no close genetic relationships to those of its subgenus, Sarbecovirus" (NCBI, 2020).

The findings of "a metagenomic study" that came out in a publication of 2019 had formerly shown that "SARS-CoV", which is "the strain of the virus" that brought about "SARS", was certainly the "most widely distributed coronavirus among a sample of *sunda pangolins*" (Liu, Chen, Chen, 2019). However, on 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2020, WHO reported that some researchers from *Guanzhou* "discovered a pangolin sample with a viral nucleic acid sequence 99% identical to SARS-CoV-2" (Cryanoski, 2020). The publication in a way provided evidence that "the receptor-binding domain of the S protein of the newly discovered pangolin-CoV is virtually identical to that of 2019-nCoV with one amino acid difference" (Xiao, Zhai, Feng, 2020).

It has been reported that microbiologists and geneticists in Texas, USA, independently discovered and established "evidence of reassortment in coronavirus", which strongly indicates the "involvement of pangolins in the origin of SARS-CoV-2" (Wong, Cregeen, Ajami, Petrosino, 2020). Despite this, pangolin coronavirus discovered till now merely "share most 92% of their whole genomes with SARS-CoV-2", and therefore make "them less similar than RaTG13 to SARS-CoV-2" (Zhang, Wu and Zhang, 2020). SARS-CoV-2 falls into the broad class or family of viruses that are referred to as coronavirus. It is said to be a "positive-sense single stranded RNA (+ss RNA) virus with a single linear RNA segment. It is the seventh coronavirus that has so far infected people, after "229E, N163, OC43, HKUI, MERS-CoV and the original SARS-CoV" (Zhu, Zhang, Wang, Li, Yang, Song et al. 2020). Just like the SARS that caused the 2003 SARS outbreak, SARS CoV-2 belongs to the subgenus *Sarbeco-virus* (beta-CoV, lineage B) (Wong, Li, Lau, Woo, 2020). The RNA sequence of SARS-CoV-2 is about 30,000 bases in terms of its length (GISAID, 2020). It is unique in relation to known betacoronavirus in terms of "its incorporation of a polybasic cleavage site, a characteristic known to increase pathogenicity and transmissibility in viruses" (Walls, Park, Tortorici, Wall, McGuire, Vessler, 2020).

SARS-CoV-2 is clearly a strain of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome related virus, and therefore cannot be said to be entirely new. Its virion is said to be about 50-200 nanometres in diameter (www.rutgers.edu). It also has four structural proteins just like other coronaviruses, and these are "S spike), E (envelope), M (Membrane) and N (Nucleocapsid) proteins, the N protein holds RNA genome, and the S, E, and M proteins together create the viral envelope" (Bedford, Neher, Hadfield, Hodcroft, Ilcism, Muller, 2020). The spike protein that has been pictured at the atomic level through the use of "cryogenic electron microscopy" is the protein that allows the virus to "attach to

and fuse with the membrane of a host cell” (Wu, Liu, Yang, Zhang, Zhong, Wang et al, 2020; Wrapp, Wang, Carbett, Goldsmith, Hsieh, Abiomo, et al. 2020; Mandelbaum, 2020).

#### 4. Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19

The profound humanitarian situation of COVID-19 pandemic comes with potential disruptive social and economic crises. The route to any possible escape seems precarious, and is worsened by epidemiological uncertainty, the unpreparedness of the political leadership and preexisting conditions in the national macro economy. Presently, there has been south-ward movement of oil prices at the global market, which is the major source of revenue to the country. This has resulted in the downward review of the 2020 national budget with severe cuts on education and health. The oil price benchmark has also been slashed from fifty-two dollars to about forty dollars by the National Assembly. This panic economic measure of the Federal Government has been followed by fourteen states as at Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2020.

It is clear from this that there has not been a unified, powerful and effective response to the economic crisis brought about by COVID-19 pandemic in the country. The consequences of this uncreative thinking by the political leadership will be tougher socio-economic impacts and the effects of COVID-19 will last longer and could destroy the entire Nigerian socio-economic system. Indeed, the Nigerian social and economic recovery plans and the Nigerian project is at risk of losing its *raison d'être* in the eyes of the citizens and the international community. Also, the debates on how best to respond to the pandemic and its socio-economic impacts have created a rift between the country's political leadership and the citizenry, which is reminiscent of debates over the 1986 Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which the then Nigerian despot, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida regarded as the only panacea to Nigeria's economic problems (Ekanem, 2010). This scenario manifests in the Federal Government insistence on feeding the school children during the pandemic, when all the schools in the country have been closed.

Health plays pivotal and critical roles in any given prosperous productive society, while panic and disease can lead to drastic reduction and even prevent production, consumption, recreational activities, travel and overall wellbeing of the citizenry (Adeola and Evans, 2018; Fourie, 2020). Health epidemic just like “the Ebola virus in West Africa”, “the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome” (MERS) epidemic in Korea and the emergence of “COVID-19” do not merely have national and international health impacts but equally socio-economic consequences. For instance, during the Ebola virus in West Africa from 2013 to 2014, there was drastic drop in government revenues across the sub-region, which includes “direct taxes on companies, VAT receipts and indirect taxes”. Also, there was huge fall in both individual and international investors' confidence that actually “led to financing gaps of more than US\$600 million over two years” (Evans, 2020). These affected all the sectors and equally have long-term effects on “Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone” (Smith et al, 2019). Also, the death of about 800 people and infection of more than 8000 people, the “economic loss due to SARS was estimated to be in the figure of \$40 billion”. The severe impact was largely due to consumer fears, as a result of the “ease of transmissibility of the virus in public settings” (Evans, 2020:4).

In the same pattern therefore, the incidence of the COVID-19 is growing exponentially with certain significant impacts on Nigeria's economy, social interactions and public health in the following ways:

- i. High Unemployment: COVID-19 pandemic is certainly creating high unemployment in the country due largely to drastic reduction in economic activities caused by the coronavirus pandemic in Nigeria. The unemployment situation was already bad in Nigeria before the emergence of the pandemic, but this is going to be made worse due to general lull in economic activities and the lockdown. The impact of this is going to be mostly on the private sector of the Nigerian economy. The commercial banks in the country started mass retrenchment exercise but the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) had to intervene to halt the exercise. The question therefore is, for how long can this intervention last? There is a limit

- to such intervention because companies cannot retain staff they will not be able to pay. There exists no legal framework to protect the workers in this regard in the country. The rate of unemployment is presently 23.1% while youth unemployment is 30.5% and this is estimated to rise 42.5% and 58.6% respectively due to COVID-19. The UNDP report on Nigeria in June, 2020 showed that about thirteen (13) million people will be out of job in 2020 in the country due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- ii. **Increased Population:** Due to the total lockdown, stay at home directive, ban on travelling, curfew, closure of schools, closure of religious centres etc, there is bound to be increased in the population of the country. With families compelled to stay indoors with no serious activities, there is bound to be close family intimacies that will lead to sexual activities. The increase in sexual activities will certainly result in unplanned pregnancies and this will add more births to the demography of the country. This will certainly compound the planning woes of the country due to lack of accurate population statistics which is currently estimated to be about two hundred (200) million before the pandemic.
  - iii. **Domestic violence:** There will certainly be increase in domestic violence during this era of the pandemic. With couples and family members forced to stay indoors together, there will be new discoveries of certain intolerable behaviours or characters. Effort to stop these new behaviours and the resistance this could bring will lead to new waves of domestic violence. Such newly discovered intolerable behaviors could even break homes.
  - iv. **Sexual crimes:** There will be increase in sexual crimes such as rape, incest, harassment etc. where adults are forced to be indoors for a long time without any meaningful activities to engage them, their minds will be engaged in what they see around them. The forced stay at home will make neighbours to see each other more, and there will be emotional attractions. This will empirically prove the saying that “an idle mind is the devil workshop”. The physical closeness, availability and accessibility will naturally create some emotional tensions and tricks. The result of all these will be an increase in sexual crimes. The evidence of can be seen in the number of pedophiles that were exposed during this lockdown.
  - v. **Higher Incidence of Poverty:** Before the pandemic, Nigeria was already officially recognized as the poverty capital of the world. Now, with the lockdown, stay at home and restrictions, the poverty situation in the country is going to be worsened. Majority of Nigerians are engaged in the informal sector of the economy, and entirely depends on daily income. The pandemic has disrupted this daily flow of incomes, and the impact of this is high rate of poverty in the country.
  - vi. **Drop in Government Revenue:** The coronavirus pandemic has severe and several impacts on global economy and trades. There is also disruption of several economic activities in the country. These disruptions will result in drastic drop in government revenues. Since companies are all closed down, there will not be able to make much profits to pay their taxes. So, both direct and indirect taxes due to government will not be available to government. With the global oil price situation, the Nigerian government will experience more drops in revenue as earlier stated. This could hamper the government ability to pay salaries and embark on the development of social infrastructures such as road constructions, funding of education, provision of water etc. This can be seen in the hasty and unwise decision of the Buhari Presidency to obtain huge loans that the administration will not be able to pay within its tenure, and this will create multifaceted problem for the country with fatal economic consequences in the future.
  - vii. **Increased Insecurity:** Clearly with increase in unemployment and incidence of poverty, there is bound to be increased insecurity in the country. These new waves of criminality and general insecurity will be hunger-induced, and frustration, will push many youths into crimes. The recent protest by the Northern Youths Forum in Katsina state, which is the home state of the President over insecurity is a validation of our logic in this regard.
  - viii. **Psychological Trauma:** The high incidence of poverty, unemployment and sexual abuses will



- result in frustration, depression, loneliness, etc and these could lead to suicide, mental disorder and violent aggressions.
- ix. High Inflation Rate: The inflation rate is bound to be higher because of the forces of demand and supply. Most companies are not producing and farmers are not planting so, the demand will outweigh the supply, and this will cause inflation. The Nigerian citizens will certainly bear the brunt as no one will be exempted. A situation where there is no increase in salaries and businesses are collapsing while the citizens are made to pay more for services and commodities than the usual price it could impoverish the citizens more and this will in turn lead to frustrations and more health hazards.
  - x. Recession: The Nigerian economy was already very fragile and prone to recession due largely to poor economic management, bad economic policies, lack of creativity of political leadership and policy makers, policy somersault, consistent inconsistency in policy, human resource recruitment (nepotism) championed by visionless presidency. Generally, the inability of the political leadership and policy makers to be proactive and constructively think outside the box are the self-induced factors that will push the Nigerian economy into recession for the second time within the life span of the Buhari administration.
  - xi. General Drop of Gross Domestic Product: The COVID-19 pandemic negatively affects all sectors of the economy of the country. The entertainment industry is severely hit. The tourism and hospitality industries may not recover from the huge loss that will be witnessed during this period of the pandemic.
  - xii. Lack of Research Development: Research development is one vital area Nigeria has not paid so much attention. This bad situation is worsened by the pandemic. The poor funding of research in the country has been the major reason why there has not been an effective control of the pandemic. The universities and other research institutions have not been funded adequately. This can be seen in the lack of laboratories that could carry out testing in the country. Before the pandemic, there were only two laboratories in the entire country that could be used for the testing of COVID-19. This pandemic will weaken the research development capacity of the country due to the panic closure of universities and research institutions in the country. This lack of research development will negatively affect the preparedness and prevention practices and capacity of the country. This lack of research development in the country also manifests in the country's reliance on measures designed and developed outside the country without adaptation and customization to the Nigerian peculiarity or situation. The CBN only provides N550 million as research grant when billions of naira are provided for small and medium economic enterprises (SMEs). This is misplaced priority for a country that desires development. This shows political leadership that is gross deficient in creativity, deep thinking and capacity to be proactive through thinking outside the box.
  - xiii. Pressure on Health Care System: The pandemic will surely place "immense and unprecedented pressure on the country's underinvested healthcare system" (UNDP, 2020) in the COVID-19 patients that will need hospitalization. As at 9<sup>th</sup> June, the country has over 12,455 cases while the bed space is just around 5,000. This is grossly inadequate. This is a clear manifestation of a political leadership that depends on medical tourism at the detriment of investment in the health sector and appropriate education. Underfunding of the health sector over the past five decades will evidently show during this period of the pandemic.
  - xiv. The Falling of Oil Price by Almost 60%: The decline in oil prices by 55 percent between January to March 2020, is one of the most fatal economic shocks that Nigeria will face especially as the oil sector contribute 65% to 90% to government and total export revenue respectively. This is given to the fact that the 2020 budget estimate was based on US\$57/barrel and production at 2.18 million barrels per day, if the price continue to fall or swings between US\$29/barrel and US\$42/barrel, it would lead to about 48% revenue decline

- of the expected revenue per month. This will specifically reduce fiscal revenue by \$10 billion and export earnings by \$19 billion (UNDP, 2020).
- xv. Pressure on the Naira: This impact is already manifesting since February as a result of the exchange rate that has depreciated by 1.0% in the informal market, which have shown a higher depreciation since the Naira was trading at N450 per dollar at the parallel/black market. The impact of the coronavirus pandemic in the advanced economies on jobs and financial transactions could have more severe negative impacts on remittances, which in 2018 accounted for 80% of the Federal budget, that affects the livelihood and spending patterns, and this will in turn have negative impact on the economy and wellbeing of the citizens.
  - xvi. Collapse of the Transport sector: The transport sector will be affected negatively especially due to the interstate travel ban, stay at home order, curfew, etc. The aviation industry will be worst hit both nationally and internationally due to the general protocols issued to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

## 5. Essencism and Policy Solutions

Education is regarded as the bedrock of development, and this is due to the fact that education is the “conveyer or vehicle employed in the transmission of cognitive activities from one generation to another. It involves the training of the 3Hs that is, the Head, Heart and Hand (Ekanem and Esien, 2014). The importance and values of education necessitates the enormous investments nations all over the world made in these vital aspects of human development. However, the maximum benefit of education a country can derive depends on the philosophy that drives the educational system of such a country. It is on the basis of this that philosophies that drive the educational systems globally are designed to cater for the nature of man, which is the physical and the spiritual. Under this split, are naturalism, empiricism, pragmatism and positivism that seeks to cater and enhance the physical nature of man; this manifests in the human cognitive activities of science and technology on one hand, and idealism, rationalism and existentialism that cater for the spiritual aspects, which manifests in ethics, law, and other non-empirical studies or disciplines on the other.

A cursory look at all the philosophies of education will reveal that none seeks to cater for the dual nature of man, which is the physical and spiritual at the same time. It is due to this that Essencism as a philosophy of Education was proposed in 2005 by Samuel Asuquo Ekanem. Essencism as a philosophy of education seeks to develop a complete human personality through the educative process. Essencism sees man as being very central in all the happenings on earth. Ekanem (2015) capture this more succinctly when he states:

Philosophy of essencism seeks to develop a complete human personality. This is because no aspect of the human nature or aspect is ignored. Man is totally developed as a physical and as a spiritual being through essencism. It is when human personality is completely developed that one can begin to talk of other aspects of development. This is because; the development of any nation is dependent upon the development of the human person (101)

This is because essencism is a “combination of physical and spiritual dimensions of man into a whole that will create a unique system of character and culture for the Nigerian State through education” (Ekanem, 2015). This combination will assist the country in her developmental effort and process to avoid the error of western civilization that lacks the spiritual dimension but instead was more concerned about the material (physical) dimension of development, which has led to several calamities including COVID-19.

The fundamental questions that emerge from the above are; why the woeful failure of western civilization that has produced COVID-19? Why could science and technology not provide the expected paradise on earth for the western world and bring an end to COVID-19? Why COVID-19 is described as an unseen enemy of mankind by the WHO despite the acclaimed potency of science as human cognitive activity?

A reflective response to these questions will certainly reveal the fact that western civilization ignores completely the spiritual aspect of development. This neglect basically cuts off the divine source of inspirational knowledge, which according to Uka (1996) directed technology from being an “ark” to a “tower of babel”. And here lies the disaster and poverty of physical or mundane knowledge, which has made it difficult for man to effectively find a permanent solution to SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). Man is God’s project and it is only that divine direction, which illuminates the spirit of man that can bring about knowledge that can practically solve man’s physical problems. This secret of man’s latent power and potential can only be found in essencism, which provides a kind of education that places man at the very centre, and its basic principles can only be discovered, defined, interpreted and applied by man. This is why man as “*homosapien*” is distinct and higher from other animals. This superiority of man over other animals and things lies in his spiritual and inspirational intelligence or knowledge that could make man to be proactive, and respond to pandemic promptly. It is these unique qualities to effectively combine the physical and spiritual that places man above all other things and could give him dominance of the world and the cognitive power to understand SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) and subdue it.

This provides us with the true image of the essence of man. It is the reason or essence of his creation. Also, the worship of God, which is another essence of man as a creature is made possible through the spirit. The Bible admonished that God is a spirit, and those (men) that worship Him must do so in truth and in spirit. The spirit is therefore the strength and power of man to overcome and subdue COVID-19, and even understand what it is and its characteristics. The spirit is what makes man look like God, and not in terms of physical appearance, but in terms of spiritual knowledge, which makes it possible for man to know the secret of God’s plan and penetrate His mind to find all solutions to his (man) problem including COVID-19 which has been described by scientists and physicians as “unseen enemy” of man. This access to the divine storehouse is what makes discoveries by man possible. To achieve this therefore, the mind as far as essencism is concerned becomes the focal lense upon which man focuses on God and nature.

Essencism here is to be seen in terms of its relevance to the human destiny as can be appreciated and applied by the Nigerian man. The foundation of this is the fact that man is a question unto himself. He determines who he is, try to understand who and what he is made of, that is, he has the ability and capacity to determine why he is, where he is, and where is going to. It is this knowledge that will make it possible for man to determine the system of his life, how he must grapple or assess the reality he finds around him as influenced or dictated by what he is and his destiny. This will present holistically his ontological base and provide the parameter of his social relationship with other men and that of his creator and origin. The realization and understanding of man, his origin and what nature expects of him, will influence, determine and transcend himself but will find concrete expression in his society, his economy, his ethics, his medicine, his science, his religion and the entire spectrum of his cultural life or pattern. This understanding creates harmonious existence, a kind of communion between man and his Creator. This harmony will bring man to the unity of reality, as he becomes a microcosm of reality, which is self-reflective and perceptible. Thus he (man) becomes the basic principle of all things. This can be seen in the words of Protagoras when he states that “Man is the measure of all things”. This places man, according to Nwoko (1992) at the apex of cosmogenesis. He further asserts that man bears in translucent manner the principle responsible for the process of being. This aphorism becomes affirmative in the Efik concept of man as “Owo edi abasi ison”, which translates or implies that “man is God of the earth”. There is also the Efik metaphysics that reflects the concept of “God” as being dualistic as can be seen in the Efik expression of “Abasi ke eyon, abasi ke ison, abasi iba”, that is, God in heaven, God on earth, there are two “gods”. This validates our argument that man represents the totality of life no matter how one looks at it. Nwoko (1985) through his analysis of the Igbo concept of man as represented by “Mmadu”, which to him “Mma” means “beauty” while “ndu” implies “life”. So, the combination of “Mma” and “ndu” according to Nwoko will give us the “beauty of life”. It is evidently clear from this that man is the epitome of life. And life includes both the physical and the spiritual. These two, constitute the fundamental elements

of life in relation to man and as a “god” on earth.

Our effort so far in this section of the paper has been to establish the fact that:

- i. For us to have a sound social system and culture in Nigeria that will enable us to be proactive, creative and be in a position to solve our national problems, it is imperative that our educational system be restructured and lay on a solid foundation that will naturally reflect the essence of man on planet earth. This will naturally inspire and impact on the people functional sensibility based on the root of their life, and the kind of knowledge that will lead to generation of appropriate skill that will be qualitative enough to satisfy the people’s needs and enable us tackle all our social ills including COVID-19.
- ii. The combination of the spiritual and physical elements of life as it concerns man’s nature will lead to a system of education that will be beneficial to Nigeria and create a new and distinct educational system for the country through essencism. The educational system that will emerge from this will make it possible for our policy makers, leaders and the entire citizenry to have scientific knowledge that can be utilized in their daily lives. Such knowledge will enable Nigerians to collectively tackle COVID -19 as a national problem.
- iii. To achieve a creative and sound philosophy of education geared towards Nigerian own specie of science and medicine which must be generated and planted in the Nigerian fertile land of essencism, which is the basis upon which man exists on planet earth. The way, Nigerian scientists and medical doctors will get to understand and appreciate the metaphysics inherent in science and medicines. This new knowledge and realization will provide the basis for creativity in these human cognitive activities, which will enable them to tackle COVID-19 more effectively and not embark on strike during such national emergency.
- iv. The Nigerian scientific, medical and technological drives must be established on a system of education that has as its basic components and elements that are suitable with the Nigerian metaphysical foundation and cultural peculiarities. This way, the country can always have home-growing solutions and approaches to the socio-economic, political and existential problems that confront her, and not aimlessly waits for imported ideas and solutions that often are never effective to our needs.
- v. Any attempt to import a philosophy (idea, knowledge, solution) that is alien to the people’s mode of reasoning, logic and metaphysics will be destructive of the cultural foundation of the people, and any science, medicine and technology (solution) that will emerge under such a system will not be able to satisfy such a system, and will not be able to satisfy the people’s basic needs and can never be effective.

The basic needs of man (Nigerians) will certainly be to satisfy his dual nature of both the physical and the spiritual. So, the physic-spirit man must become the focal point of learning and skill that is of education, science, medicine and technology. The physical and the spiritual elements must be perfectly combined to bring about education, science, medicine and technology that will suitably satisfy the natural essence of man. This symbiotic approach to education, science and technology will aid man not to be destructive of reality, which he is a part of and epitomizes.

Also, this will enhance and establish his knowledge and skill that is, *scientia* and *techne*. The reason for these must be for the benefit of man. Nwoko (1992) puts it more explicitly when he states, “the rationality of learning and skill must be for the good of man” (87). Again, he declares in his book, *The Rationality of African Socialism* that “knowledge itself is the communion with the object (1985:45). This confirms that education must have as its basic content both practical and spiritual values, which is to assist man realise his being and destiny as a rational and communion being. This shows a harmonious unity with his identity, a unity with other people (men-Nigerians) and realities and unity with his Creator (God). It is only education that contains these two basic elements of physical (practical) and spiritual (which necessarily includes ethics or morality) that can be regarded as genuine knowledge. This also applies to science, technology, medicine and every aspect of our national life. So, any knowledge that does not “enhance the good and the realization of the destiny of

man in its communion with nature” will be disastrous and destructive (Nwoko, 1983:87). Basically, reality on the basis of the external, has cogent application based on its natural relation to man, which cognitively involves knowledge and life, hence, as a nation, Nigeria must have to redefine her metaphysics to truly reflect the essence of man.

What can be drawn from our analysis so far is the fact that it is from the spiritual (idea) that we get to the physical (practice, which include science, medicine and technology). This assertion has its historical validation traced to the origin of science, medicine, technology etc “were once products of man’s wondering mind as he speculates and thinks about the universe. So, from Thales’ question about the basic constitutive element (urstuff) of the universe to the findings of Isaac Newton were direct mental activities to know and interpret the world concretely through empirical foundation” (Ekanem, 2005:229). Evidently, all these first started through inspiration in the minds of these great philosophers. Again, it is the spiritual discipline of man that can promote scientific attitude of rigour and perseverance in any inquiry. Ekanem (2005) succinctly captured this, when he states:

...from the ancient time to the medieval epoch, all human knowledge was simply known as philosophy (love of wisdom, thinking and speculation). There was nothing like empirical science or its application in the form we have come to systematize it as found in modern science and technology. However, our modern science and technology came as a result of philosophical development when the “mental activities of man were freed from religious, political and social fetters”. This shows that man started thinking freely about everything not confined to doctrines of the church, politics and social beliefs termed basically on religious tenets. The renaissance, that is, the epoch of “rebirth” led to the development of science distinctly from philosophy and the practical application of this developmental scientific knowledge led to technological advancement (229).

What can be gleaned from this is the fact that science is a product of a speculative mind, a mental construct and fixation which is a derivative of an inspiration, which in itself is spiritual. So, it is the tacit agreement to deny the first source of knowledge (scientific and technical) and utilize only its product, which is practical thought has created the epistemic problem in science and technology. It is this epistemic confusion due to the denial of the source of scientific and technological knowledge, which is spiritual that has made it difficult and problematic for science and technology to be able to solve all human existential problems, which include the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

## 6. The Benefits of Essencism as a Philosophy

Essencism as an effective combination of practical scientific education and the spiritual essence of man through the educative process to create a holistic system that seeks to positively uplift and promote the essence of man will therefore lead to the following:

- i. Create a system that will produce highly scientific and technologically literate citizens.
- ii. It will improve the sterile scientific curriculum as it exists in the country presently, which hinders the practical utilization of scientific knowledge for both human and social development.
- iii. Establish a relationship between science, technology and social issues for existential values.
- iv. Evaluate various beliefs, views and systems and their alternatives that can aid creativity.
- v. Make a critical estimation and reflection on science and technology, and its effects in terms of ethical values, principles and standards.
- vi. Generate and make possible the ability for Nigerians to be in a position to creatively solve problems and articulate decision skills that is proactive and not reactive.
- vii. Make the citizens to be very effective, active and participatory in every facet of national life. With this kind of citizens, COVID-19 will be defeated and its spread will be highly minimized.
- viii. Create environmental impact awareness of science and technology on human and social

- life as it can be seen in COVID-19 pandemic.
- ix. Define the social relevance of science and technology and the existential issues surrounding them.
  - x. Put man at the centre of all developmental processes as far as science and technology are concerned.
  - xi. Create a system and pattern of science and technology that will take both the human and social environments into considerations with the intention towards the establishment of a friendly ecosystem.
  - xii. Establish harmony between man, nature, science and technological progress and thereby creating a kind of symbiotic relationship between man and his cognitive activities..
  - xiii. Establish unique knowledge, skill and experience that are peculiar to Nigeria, which will aid Nigerians to survive and satisfy their basic necessities of life such as food, cloth and shelter during pandemic.
  - xiv. To encourage creative ability in Nigerians that will aid them to evolve a scientific and social culture that will suit the peculiar needs of the country during pandemic.
  - xv. Inspire a consciousness that will lead to localization of all scientific guidelines during pandemic in Nigeria through a wide spread knowledge that underpins creativity which is uniquely Nigerianised to a defined conceptual standard.
  - xvi. Bring about an educational system that will boost scientific and technological evolution with all the comparative advantage of the country that will progressively spring from the metaphysics and logic of the citizens of Nigeria.
  - xvii. Create an indigenous scientific and technological revolution through the school system by championing the “spirit of creativity, inquisitiveness and self-reliance”, which fall within the available resources of the country.
  - xviii. Promote diversification of the economy, “technological pluralism” and efficient “adaptation of all technical or practical knowledge” that will seek to satisfy the national socio-cultural pattern of multiculturalism.
  - xix. Create a system of education that will enhance effective combination of human and material resources for sustainable national development within the template of social equality and gender sensitivity.
  - xx. Facilitate an educational system that will promote morality as an individual criteria or standard to satisfy a national socio-cultural and ethical standard for national integration and development.

These efforts must be done to systematically, functionally and structurally conform to national and cultural conditions of fairness, equity, justice, unity and equality of every citizen.

## **7. Leadership and Proactive Management Approaches**

From our analysis, there is a global evidence that the world is facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nigeria and the citizens are no exception. What is needed now in the country more than ever, is that leadership which can unite the spirit of Nigerians and rouse collective determination and will to defeat COVID-19. Indeed, the country is on trial and tested presently, as it has been in the past, and it has the ability and opportunity to mobilise its people to turn the tide against the coronavirus. However, time is of essence and immediate action is imperative. What is required therefore is a leadership that is proactive, creative, focused and determined to recognize and value the essence, relevance and importance of a thorough and efficient thoughtful approaches to the existential threat of COVID-19, which is a disaster that reveals the complex intertwined nature of human existence.

This leadership that will recognize the positive impact of diversity in all its iterations and existential issues can only emerge through an educational system that is laid on a sound philosophical foundation as found in essencism. This is because the complete personalities that make

up the leadership will be totally developed both physically and spiritually. This is due to the fact that essencism as Ekanem (2005) puts it:

*... will bring about a greater awareness of what Uka refers to as the 'socio-ethical and political hazards accompanying western industrial technology' which target is to establish and lay a solid foundation of a paradise on earth through the means of finite man and finite technology which the developing third world countries like Nigeria is tempted to copy through the misguided process of technology transfer. Technology through the due process of essencist system of education is to be drained of all the elements of capitalism, power and those potent dangers inherent in the over-materialist notion of technology. This way, the paradox of an elitist class of enlightened and skilled citizenry co-existing with an impoverished, under privileged, and unskilled majority will be replaced with a society whose members are thoroughly schooled in every aspect of human essence that will produce a highly practical oriented and morally sound citizenry (236).*

This will certainly bring about a new philosophy of existence that will affect every facets of life of the citizenry as it will for instance create new techniques of living. It will also make Nigerians to develop a culture of practical skills to provide solutions to all basic problems of man especially during the era of pandemic like the coronavirus. This will make the use of tools a cherished pattern of life among Nigerians. Under this circumstance, it will not just be the "designing, fashioning or making tools, but serious consideration will be given to the usefulness and social relevance of such products" (Ekanem, 2005:236). This will be carried out with a reflection on the socio-ethical and cultural values of Nigerians.

The needed leadership during the era of pandemic such as that of the coronavirus can only evolve in Nigeria through essencism as a philosophy of education. This is due to the fact that essencism tries to provide direction for a national regeneration and rebirth. This can be seen through the tripartite link of education, philosophy and science, technology with a tripod stand of the spiritual, physical and cultural values of the people, which will be reflective of the ethical standard of the Nigerian society. This is to be achieved and realized through the spiritual development of the citizenry from which the leaders emerged. Inclusive in the spiritual development of the citizens is the ethical value for all that is good, which is a sine-qua-non for the development of any society. Essencism will help "provide man with a sound knowledge of what is good and bad. The knowledge that essencism will provide will make it possible for all Nigerian citizens to accept as "a socio-cultural practice that honestly pays". This will also assist to in the eradication of the "culture and practice of looting the national treasury" with impunity through public office. The acceptance of these "socio-cultural reforms" and transformation that essencism will bring about will be due to the fact that the physical and spiritual aspects of Nigerians will be "developed through this educational philosophy". This is anchored on the logic and prism that "as a spirit being, man is directly linked with God from where the source of his intellectual inspiration is derived" (Ekanem, 2015:405).

The spiritual advancement of man that will be achieved through essencism will certainly reestablish a link between God and man. With the link between God and man made possible by essencism there will be an established harmony because the leaders will no longer loot the national, state and local governments' treasuries. The money allocated to the building of hospitals, provision of medical equipment, supply of drugs and training of health workers, research grants, etc, will be used appropriately for the purpose and not diverted to personal bank accounts of the leaders.

Essencism as a philosophy will help bring about leadership that will lead by example. This is because there will be hospitals that are well equipped, staffed and patronized by the leaders who will not embark on medical tourism. Also, the research centers and institutions will be properly funded and the researchers will have the requisite mindsets to look inward for home-grown solutions to the country's medical problems instead of looking forward to imported solutions. Essencism will make it possible for Nigerian medical doctors, scientists and other experts to remain in the country and contribute to her development instead of migrating to foreign countries for greener pastures. This new approach, new zeal and patriotism will be made possible because the leaders will always do the

right thing, and no Nigerian will be discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity and religion. There will be a new sense of Nigerianess that will bond all through essencism. This will bring about a shift in both research and pandemic management efforts that will be proactive and creative.

## **8. Health Policy Framework**

With essencism as a philosophy of education, the leaders and policy makers will come out with home-grown policies that will certainly take care of the poor masses. The health policy will be such that cater for the direct and indirect burden of the patients during the coronavirus pandemic. The coronavirus pandemic imposes enormous burden on the citizens and patients in terms of costs relating to medical care, disability, mortality and negative employment consequences. With essencism these burdens will be catered for by the leadership of the country through appropriate health policy, which will equally include the economic cost of illness-related productivity losses. The health policy framework will also take care of the barriers in access to services, health outcomes and the financial effects on the households that the pandemic will create. The health policy will be such that government will take responsibility for all the losses during the pandemic and be in a position to creatively restore normalcy and socio-economic conditions to healthy one.

## **9. Education and Health Literacy**

Another challenge that could be surmounted is education and health literacy. The education sector has been seriously affected during this pandemic. All the schools are under lock and key. This is very pathetic because education is seen as a fundamental contributing factor towards the reduction of infectious diseases. Therefore, essencism as a philosophy of education will help enhance health education and, literacy and reinforce acceptable effects on the potentials of the citizens to tackle and take positive steps to prevent the spread of deadly diseases like the coronavirus. The reduction of COVID-19 through essencism as a philosophy of education would certainly have positive effects on health education and literacy because the increase cases of the virus can inhibit or hinder cognition, teaching and learning including school attendance as it is presently the case in Nigeria with the close down of schools.. So, effective and functional health education and literacy through essencism have the prospect and capacity to holistically contribute to drastic cut in the confirmed cases of the virus. The effective control of this virus can only be achieved through a robust multifaceted and interdisciplinary approaches in terms of education and health literacy underpin by a sound philosophical mast in the mold of essencism.

## **10. National Technical Council on COVID-19**

To effectively protect the country from the rampaging and mystery coronavirus and the negative socio-economic consequences, there is the urgent need to establish a standing National Technical Council on COVID-19 (NTCC). This is quite distinct from the Presidential Task Force (PTF), which is ad hoc and seriously deficient in technical composition. The mission of NTCC should be to control the spread of the coronavirus and drastically reduce the accompanied health, social and economic consequences and risk. The NTCC should be made to support and improve collaboration and make high-level, evidence-based, and home-grown recommendations to existing organisations like the PTF, Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), state and local governments and non-profits and non-governmental organisations, faith-based societies, etc. It will technically identify gaps in the surveillance and pharmaceutical countermeasures adapt and seek to customize WHO recommendations and financing. The NTCC's composition should be broad-based on competence, knowledge, experience, capacity, know-how and ability, devoid of any ethnic, political, religious or group interests in the guise of regional spread and federal character. Also, experienced philosophers, sociologists, communication experts, educationists, psychologists, economists of diverse background



should be included with scientists, medical doctors, epidemiologists, pharmacists, researchers with experience in viruses etc should be pulled together as members of the NTCC.

## 11. Conclusion

Base on the severe negative impacts on mankind, society and economy, there is the urgent need for scientists, medical experts and government functionaries to recognize the severity and existential calamity of the coronavirus pandemic and its future social and economic destructive capacities. It is our position that there is a serious leadership deficit and the country's approach to the pandemic has been reactionary instead of proactive. The policy framework to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic is grossly lacking in philosophical depth within the educational system. As a consequence of this, the medical, pharmaceutical and socio-economic measures have been import-based, without any indigenous thinking. The totality of these is harmful to the socio-economic development and cultural value of the country. This equally expose the sterile and dysfunctional characteristics of our educational system as lacking in a philosophical foundation that promotes practical value of knowledge and education in the country.

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic projects the weakness of our health system, incompetence of the leadership of the country at all levels, and sterility and unproductive nature of the colonial inherited educational system, which is devoid of practical utility value in content and relevance. It further exposed the recitative quality of our science education that produced scientific illiterate citizens. Our discovery is that our educational system lacks a philosophical foundation that could drive, direct and define its social relevance and practical importance. Our educational system produced leaders that have not been able to discover their purpose on earth hence, their inability to solve the several problems of the Nigerian State including the coronavirus pandemic. It is on the basis of this that essencism as a philosophy of education is proposed for the country. This will assist to redefine, redirect and refocus the entire socio-economic, political, educational, scientific and technological structures or system of the country towards the generation of a common national value and culture, which is presently lacking.

Essencism as a philosophy of education will help develop highly balanced citizenry that is physically strongly and spiritually sound. This complete development of the Nigerian citizens will result in scientifically, technologically literate and savvy citizens, who are morally upright to know the value of what is good and bad. This will enable the Nigerian citizens to be better placed and be in a better position to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. Essencism will help Nigerian citizens to be able through the educative process develop a common socio-cultural value that will make all the citizens to see Nigeria first and self-last. Indeed, through essencism the self-mentality that is our bane will be killed and uprooted from our national psyche. It is only when such a foundation is laid that the country can be in a better position to collectively fight and defeat the coronavirus pandemic.

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