

**Africa and the Double Pandemic: COVID-19, Terrorism, and the Future of
Education in the New Normal**

Toyin Falola

Convocation Lecture, Federal University Lokoja, Nov. 11, 2021

LECTURER'S BIO

Toyin Falola, Professor of History, University Distinguished Teaching Professor, and the Jacob and Frances Sanger Mossiker Chair in the Humanities, the University of Texas at Austin. He is an Honorary Professor, University of Cape Town, and Extraordinary Professor of Human Rights, University of the Free State. He had served as the General Secretary of the Historical Society of Nigeria, the President of the African Studies Association, Vice-President of UNESCO Slave Route Project, and the Kluge Chair of the Countries of the South, Library of Congress. He is a member of the Scholars' Council, Kluge Center, the Library of Congress. He has received over thirty lifetime career awards and fourteen honorary doctorates. He has written extensively on the humanities, including *The Humanities in Africa: Knowledge Production, Universities, and the Production of Knowledge*, and a forthcoming book by University of Rochester Press, *Decolonizing African Studies: Knowledge Production, Agency, and Voices*.

PROTOCOLS

Create a list

**Africa and the Double Pandemic: COVID-19, Terrorism, and the Future of
Education in the New Normal**

Introduction

It is my pleasure to be here today to speak to you about the state of our dear continent, Africa. I want to specially thank the Governing Council, Management and Staff of the University and the organizers for putting this Convocation Lecture in place despite the bottlenecks that the pandemic has caused everyone. For the participants here today, I am pleased to stand before you to raise issues that concern us all and explore possible solutions to them. But more importantly, I am glad that you are all here because you still share the belief that this continent will one day attain its desired place and that the journey towards that is worth taking by us as players and agents of change.

Each time I am called upon for a gathering of this nature, especially where students who are soon to experience the real world are gathered, I am always reminded of the hope that I have in this generation and the ones coming after. I see before me the youth that will revolutionize Africa and achieve genuine development across all levels of human endeavor. I am, however, simultaneously reminded that this will happen when there is a genuine understanding and an historical comprehensive grasp of the colonial and neocolonial rootedness of what the current problems facing Africa are, their impacts on the development of the continent, and how best to solve these perennial and seemingly intractable problems. This is why I have taken it upon myself to look into some of Africa's recent throes and how we all can work together to adjust the challenges the continent faces daily to fit into the operations of the "New Normal".

In recent times, the phrase “New Normal” has been used to symbolise a time after the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Beyond its attachment to the pandemic, it signifies the time when we have to come to the realization that things are largely not the way they used to be two years ago. The advent and spread of the covid-19 pandemic has changed a lot about the way we observe, think, strategize and implement things in our societies, and as progressive people, we must learn to key into all these if we are to live up to the standards of the new world.

Putting the developmental administrative traumas confronting African nations into a realistic perspective, Bola Dauda, for example, noted that the bland colonial education policies in Nigeria meant that the Northern Region had less than one percent of the Nigeria Civil Service at the time of independence in 1960.¹ Many African states were in a situation hardly any better than that of Congo (Zaire) which became independent with only three university graduates and like Zambia, mainland Tanzania faced independence with barely 100 graduates. Many African countries have not recovered fully from this stunted colonial educational development policies. How COVID-19 has worsened the problems of Africa today will be considered. There is no doubt that Africa has been a continent where perennial problems of socio-political and socio-economic coloration exist, and the pandemic has brought this to the fore even more forcefully. For a continent striving through thick and thin to survive and reach its potentials, the effects of the pandemic on its reformative institutions will always be significant. This reason is why I will also be considering how

¹ Bola Dauda, “Taking Democracy Seriously: Democracy-Bureaucracy Relations.” In *Democracy and Socialism in Africa* edited by Robin Cohen and Harry Gouldbourne, 53-69 (Colorado: Westview Press Inc., 1991).

the pandemic has had major effects on the institution of education in Africa. It is important that, as an institution that prepares young minds for the future, Africa's educational system can duly adjust to the changes of the "New Normal" and move rapidly with global innovations as they pass through formal and informal training.

While the pandemic traveled suddenly to Africa and has done its part, the continuous problem of terrorism is another throe of the continent. For years, the continent has witnessed unbridled killings and wanton destruction of properties triggered by different terrorist groups and overcoming this has become a Herculean task for the continent. While still at it, the pandemic set in, leaving an effect that has both fostered and festered the power and daring capacity of these terrorist groups. This is because significant attention was shifted from fighting terrorism to saving the African people from the health crisis caused by the pandemic. Since part of our focus is on education, it is also important to brood on how terrorism – especially Islamist extremists/extremism – has, in its way, affected education in Africa, and how there is an urgent need for a new perspective geared toward not just cutting off terrorism, but also saving the future of education in Africa.

A Triple Tragedy: COVID-19, Terrorism and Africa's Economic Plummet

In December 2019, the town of Wuhan in China realized that it had been faced with a life-threatening virus which, at that time, had already killed tens of people in the small town.² The life-threatening virus, which would later be known as COVID-19, fully broke out in March of the following year and was declared by the World Health Organization

² Marco Ciotti, Massimo Ciccozzi, Alessandro Terrinoni, Wen-Can Jiang, Cheng-Bin Wang and Sergio Bernadini, "The COVID-19 Pandemic," *Critical Reviews in Clinical Laboratory Sciences* 57, no. 6 (2020): 365-388.

(WHO) as a pandemic in over 150 countries globally, including countries in Africa.³ Estimated to be the second-worst global crisis since World War II, COVID-19 caught all the countries in the world unaware, but as was the experience in the past, the case of Africa was special. This was not because African countries had noticed its outbreak and prepared for it but because amidst the tragedies of terrorism and political and economic instability rampant in the continent, COVID-19 was added to the problems and complicated possible solutions.

While the spread of COVID-19 had minimal health effects on African countries, compared to other countries outside the continent, the damage it did to the fragile economy of the continent has yet to be recovered from. The pandemic took its turn to ravage Africa and destabilize most parts of its national living and economic stability that were held by acts of terrorism and political and economic instability. Official statistics from international health authorities show that, as at September 2021, Africa had recorded more than 200,000 death tolls caused by Covid-19.⁴ Even before as many deaths as these were recorded, the state of affairs on the continent had already dived because of the instability and unpreparedness of the government of the different countries to act swiftly during the outbreak of the pandemic. For instance, Nigeria, one of the continent's biggest economies, put little or no measures in place to curb the virus until it recorded the first case of the

³ WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19, *WHO*, 2020, accessed September 15, 2021, <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>.

⁴ AfricaNews, "Africa Covid Death Toll Tops 200,000," *AfricaNews*, 2021, accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.africanews.com/2021/09/08/africa-covid-death-toll-tops-200-000/>.

pandemic, even though there was an ample opportunity to have prevented or, at worst, delayed the contraction of the virus in the country. Unlike Nigeria, many other African countries were slack in acting to curb or manage the virus until it spread and was declared a matter of health emergency around the world. It was after this that various governments in Africa changed their lax strategy and started acting swiftly to put measures in place to manage the spread of the pandemic when its contraction in their country could have been prevented. The result of this lethargy was not just avoidable, it later came to be part of the throes that bedevil the African continent.

Given that social activities and human interactions triggered its spread, countries worldwide were advised to keep the state of their citizens' interactions within minimal levels. To do this, countries put lockdown measures in place, closed down factories, and advised their citizens to work from home. Not having a choice but to follow suit with the advised health regulations, African countries, too, had to shut down their economy and major factories and limit people's interactions by putting in place lockdown measures. For a continent already battling an unstable economy, keeping its people out of their daily jobs and shutting the major means of production had huge effects on the continent. Consequently, more people had been hurled into poverty while many lost their jobs. It further points to the possibility of a sharp reduction in the government's capability to tackle the continent's problems that preceded the emergence of COVID-19. For instance, the problem of terrorism – as important as it is – had to, at some point, take the back seat because of the devotion of all or part of state resources meant for fighting it, to the health sector to combat the spread of the pandemic.

As this happened, terrorism was given an open opportunity to fester and grow and continually ravage the continent through its ruthless activities, including the destruction of lives and property. For Africa, this creates a case of a double tragedy having to, on the one hand, deploy resources and medical expertise to battle the pandemic and curb its spread and, on the other hand, ensure that the perennial problem of terrorism is eradicated. Sadly, none of these tragedies has been successfully tackled. Rather, death tolls caused by the pandemic keep increasing and, concomitantly, insecurity and terrorism keep bolstering.

Before the pandemic, terrorism in Africa has always posed a grave concern to many. Although the world, in general, has recorded the rapid expansion of international terrorism right from the period after 9/11, Africa, with all her underlying challenges of corruption and bad governance, coupled with economic and political instability, presents herself as an environment that facilitates terrorism.⁵ Even though various actors – both international and domestic – have been mobilized to help fight against the common threat to peace and security,⁶ terrorism on the African continent has constantly been on the

⁵ Tiffany Howard, "Failed States and the Spread of Terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 11 (2010): 960-988.

⁶ Jessica R. Piombo, "Terrorism and US Counter-Terrorism Programs in Africa: An Overview," *Strategic Insights* 6, no. 1 (2007): 1-11.

increase.⁷ From major terrorist activity in Somalia,⁸ South Sudan,⁹ and Mali,¹⁰ to Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) attacks in Nigeria,¹¹ innocent civilians remain the main victims of these violent attacks. In 2015, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) reported about 381 attacks on civilians in Africa, which, in turn, led to about 1,394 deaths in that year alone.¹² Of course, six years down the line, the number of both attacks and fatalities has tripled and destruction of property has escalated, thus, culminating in the loss of the continent's economic value.¹³

⁷ Asongu Simplice, Vanessa Tchamyoun, Asongu Ndemaze and Tchamyoun Nina, "Fighting Terrorism in Africa: Evidence from Bundling and Unbundling institutions," *Empirical Economics* 56, no. 3 (2019): 883-933.

⁸ Mohammed Ibrahim, "Somalia and Global Terrorism: A Growing Connection?" *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 3 (2010): 283-295.

⁹ Erdwin J. Wunderlich, *US Rapprochement with Sudan: State Sponsor of Terrorism No More* (United States of America: Naval War College Newport Ri, 2018).

¹⁰ Elena Dal Santo and Elizabeth Johanna van der Heide, "Escalating Complexity in Regional Conflicts: Connecting Geopolitics to Individual Pathways to Terrorism in Mali," *African Security* 11, no. 3 (2018): 274-291.

¹¹ Chuku Chukua, Dominic Abang and Ima-Abasi Isip, "Growth and Fiscal Consequences of Terrorism in Nigeria," *Defence and Peace Economics* 30, no. 5 (2019): 549-569.

¹² Joseph Mroszczyk and Max Abrahms, "Terrorism in Africa: Explaining the Rise of Extremist Violence Against Civilians," *E-International Relations*, accessed October 7, 2021, <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/04/09/terrorism-in-africa-explaining-the-rise-of-extremist-violence-against-civilians/>.

¹³ Edem Richard Kodjo and Chigozie Nelson Nkalu, "Growth and Fiscal Effects of Terrorism in Nigeria," In *The Impact of Global Terrorism on Economic and Political Development* edited by Ramesh Chandra Das, pp. 293-306 (London: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2019).

Terrorism has expanded such that, as it stands, African countries rank very high on the list of countries with the highest terrorist risks.¹⁴

COVID-19 and terrorism have undoubtedly had great effects on the African economy. However, the effects have extended far beyond just disrupting the economy.¹⁵ Put succinctly, many African countries face economic challenges due to rising debt levels and other structural issues,¹⁶ thus, forcing several African countries to go on a spree of massive borrowings.¹⁷ All these show that the pandemic has grossly affected the economy of African countries far more than could be imagined. Moreover, the general downturn that has affected the global economy has also trickled down to Africa,¹⁸ as one of the integral parts of the world's economy lost a huge chunk of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) due to the COVID-19.¹⁹ Also, African countries that have been relying solely or largely on

¹⁴ Institute for Economics and Peace, "Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism," *Global Terrorism Index, 2015*, accessed September 20, 2021, <https://privacyinternational.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/Global%20Terrorism%20Index%202015%2C%20Institute%20for%20Economics%20%26%20Peace.pdf>.

¹⁵ Mehmet Çınar, "The Effects of Terrorism on Economic Growth: Panel Data Approach," *Proceedings of Rijeka Faculty of Economics: Journal of Economics and Business* 35, no. 1 (2017): 97-121.

¹⁶ Anzette Were, "Debt Trap? Chinese Loans and Africa's Development Options," *Africa Portal*, accessed October 7, 2021, <https://www.africaportal.org/publications/debt-trap-chinese-loans-and-africas-development-options/>.

¹⁷ Jeremy Bulow, Carmen Reinhart, Kenneth Rogoff and Christoph Trebesch, "The Debt Pandemic," *Finance & Development* 57, no. 003 (2020): 12-16.

¹⁸ Gil Shapira, Damien de Walque and Jed Friedman, "How many Infants may have Died in Low-income and Middle-income Countries in 2020 due to the Economic Contraction Accompanying the COVID-19 Pandemic? Mortality Projections based on Forecasted Declines in Economic Growth," *BMJ Open* 11, no. 8 (2021): e050551.

consumable products from other countries have had their currency value steadily lost against the dollar due to the unstable economy, Nigeria being a case in point.²⁰ As the pandemic crisis lingers, African nations are consistently battling endemic problems of feeding their population and maintaining security.²¹ It seems that for much of the crisis, the effects on food, human, and property security have skyrocketed.²² Beaming the searchlight on Nigeria, for instance, long before the pandemic started, there had been issues revolving around food crisis in the country, triggered particularly by insecurity and caused by terrorism, herders-farmers classes and banditry.²³ When the global pandemic broke out and the shutdown of production factories and the informal sector was forced to happen,²⁴

¹⁹ Kartik Jayaram, Acha Leke, Amandla Ooko-Ombaka and Ying Sunny Sun, "Tackling COVID-19 in Africa," *McKinsey and Company*, 2020, accessed October 7, 2021, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/middle-east-africa/tackling-covid-19-in-africa>.

²⁰ Ali Umar Ahmad, Suraya Ismail, Siba Dayyabu, Ibrahim Sambo Farouq, Aminu Hassan Jakada and Umar Aliyu Mustapha, "Non-Linear Causal Link between Central Bank Intervention and Exchange Rate Volatility in Nigeria," *Global Journal of Management And Business Research* 20, no. 6 (2020): 1-14.

²¹ Colin M. Hall, Terence P. Dawson, Jennie. I. Macdiarmid, Robert B. Matthews and George P. Smith, "The Impact of Population Growth and Climate Change on Food Security in Africa: Looking Ahead to 2050," *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability* 15, no. 2 (2017): 124-135.

²² David Laborde, Anna Herforth, Derek D. Headey and Saskia de Pee, "COVID-19 Pandemic Leads to a Greater Depth of Unaffordability of Healthy and Nutrient-adequate Diets in Low-and Middle-income Countries," *Nature Food* 2, no. 7 (2021): 473-475.

²³ Adesoji Adelaja, Justin George and Takashi Miyahara, "Food Insecurity and Terrorism," *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy* 41, no. 3 (2019): 475-497.

²⁴ Elvis K. Avenyo, Joan N. Francois and Zinyemba P. Tatenda, *COVID-19, Lockdowns, and Africa's Informal Sector: Lessons from Ghana* (United Nations University: Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology, 2020).

the economy plummeted greatly and the already feeble economy felt the weight of an unexpected global crisis. This incidentally led to several rounds of inflation, further pushing the population to deeper poverty and worsening the health crisis in the country.²⁵

Terrorism and Its Impact on Education

It is universal knowledge that education performs an important role in nation-building. In the history of many developed countries and continents of the world today, the role of education has taken center stage in almost everything that has contributed to genuine development. This is why a lot of investment in human and capital resources is often made on education and attention is paid to it to guard against real or perceived threats. For African countries, the role of education is not different, even though not so much attention is paid to raising the standard of education in many countries on the continent. The utility of education extends beyond merely upskilling the citizenry to become adept at professions that will generate financial returns for them and economic output for society.

When properly administered, education thoroughly liberates the human mind from the shackles of ignorance, blatant subjectivity, and debilitating dogma. It empowers the individual with the weaponry to analyze issues, explore accessible information, and consider available options toward attaining enlightened decision-making. Moreover, it makes possible critical thinking that propels the educated mind to scrutinize facts, opinions, and events to achieve objective thoughts and make independent judgment. In essence, an educated person can conceive thoughts for and by themselves and relate with the world

²⁵ Vasily Erokhin and Tianming Gao, "Impacts of COVID-19 on Trade and Economic Aspects of Food Security: Evidence from 45 Developing Countries," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 16 (2020): 5775.

based on their reflections and appraisals rather than merely and entirely relying on other parties' slanted cogitations and conclusions. In essence, education engenders critical thinking and self-reflection.

The amount of economic empowerment that education gives to those who are so advantaged to have it is unparalleled. In standard economies, college-educated graduates are generally more financially successful than people of their age who did not acquire higher education.²⁶ Although it is arguable and contentious, in most climes, there is the general notion that the more sophisticated the grade of education attained, the higher the income.²⁷ As such, if an individual desires economic freedom and prosperity, getting an education offers a proven pathway. It is no wonder why the saying is prevalent that, “If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.” To say the least, education is a non-negotiable prerequisite for the economic emergence and prosperity of nations. The "Asian Tigers" and various Latin-American nations that have strived to achieve economic dominance in the past century all credit a huge part of their success stories to their vibrant education sectors.²⁸ This is not hard to find, as human capital development invariably translates to economic development. Therefore, a challenge to education, one of the key

²⁶ Mohamad Fazli Sabri, *Pathways to Financial Success: Determinants of Financial Literacy and Financial Well-Being among Young Adults* (United States: Iowa State University, 2011).

²⁷ Nick Morrison, “Higher Education Gap Between Rich And Poor Reaches 10-Year High,” *Forbes*, 2019, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nickmorrison/2019/12/17/higher-education-gap-between-rich-and-poor-reaches-10-year-high/?sh=7be34f0e749a>.

²⁸ Paul Morris, “Asia's Four Little Tigers: A Comparison of the Role of Education in Their Development,” *Comparative Education* 32, no. 1 (1996): 95-109.

components of human capital development, is an affront to economic emancipation. Anything to the contrary drags economic liberation.

The combination of the above factors and more make education a formidable threat to the fostering and spread of criminality and terrorism. A truly educated mind, which is largely free from the clutches of poorly informed dogma, will most likely not take on the extremist or fanatic end of any religious, socio-economic, or tribal creed. More importantly, it is highly improbable, except it is being done for clandestine political aggrandizements, for such a person to engage in terror on behalf of or further the said creed. Consequently, religious, tribal, or other social warlords find it very difficult to carry out "recruitment exercises" in places where the wider majority are learned. The economic empowerment that education engenders creates an atmosphere hostile to the propagation of terrorist thought or activity. Whenever people are gainfully employed or engaged in some impactful and beneficial activity spurred by their education, the tendency to engage in destructive activities, such as participation in terrorism, will be completely out of the question. Due to the plethora of challenges that education poses to the festering of terrorism, the merchants of insurgency strive hard to frustrate the continued enlightenment of people's minds, most especially the young. Terrorist groups worldwide and overwhelmingly in Africa go to extreme lengths to engage in activities and employ strategies that keep as many youngsters as possible out of the various institutions of learning. Some terrorist groups go as far as making the abhorrence and total aversion toward what they call "Western education" a central theme of their existence, thought systems and operations. Prominent amongst the terrorist organizations with such creed is Nigeria's (and now Western Africa's) most ferocious killer sect, *Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunna*

Lidda 'Awati Wal Jihad, whose eponym, *Boko Haram*, translates to "Western education is forbidden,"²⁹ and its progeny, the Islamic State in West African Province (ISWAP).³⁰ Strategically and tactically, these terrorist groups make schooling frustrating. One of the tactics that groups such as Boko Haram use are to directly attack learning institutions to carry out their dastardly acts. The most common of such acts is to abduct the students who attend these schools often in exchange for ransom and, at times, just to "prove a point."

Boko Haram's kidnapping of girls of Chibok Government Secondary School in Borno State has been one of the defining historical moments in Nigeria, one that garnered international response,³¹ globally-acclaimed book publications,³² and millions of Euros in ransom.³³ Probably motivated by the worldwide spectacle that their cowardly act generated, Boko Haram and satellite organizations that have been several times linked to it³⁴ have successfully executed school abductions of various scales, most of them in recent

²⁹ Andrew Walker, *What is Boko Haram?* (Washington,DC: US Institute of Peace, 2012).

³⁰ Kyle Almond, "How ISIS Changed Iraqi Schools," *CNN*, 2017, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2017/07/world/iraq-schools-cnnphotos/>.

³¹ John Campbell, "Western Media and Distortion of Nigeria's Chibok Kidnapping," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2021, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/western-media-and-distortion-nigerias-chibok-kidnapping>.

³² Hinshaw Drew and Joe Parkinson, *Bring Back Our Girls: The Astonishing Survival and Rescue of Nigeria's Missing Schoolgirls* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2021).

³³ Jariel Arvin, "How Kidnap for ransom Became the "Most-Lucrative Industry" in Nigeria," *Vox*, 2021, accessed September 30 21, <https://www.vox.com/22596198/students-nigeria-profit-kidnapping>.

³⁴ Malik Samuel, "Boko Haram Teams Up with Bandits," *Institute for Security Studies*, 2021, accessed September 30, 2021 <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/boko-haram-teams-up-with-bandits-in-nigeria>.

times. Another even more worrisome approach that African terrorist groups take is to storm the institutions of learning and cause wanton damage to the lives of the students and the properties on the campuses. Boko Haram, in particular, has become adept at doing this to institutions of various grades over the years.³⁵ In East Africa, the deadly group, Al-Shabaab, also makes use of the strategy routinely,³⁶ attacking teachers and school administrators whom they see as major cogs in the wheel of progress and seen as making the training of young minds impossible. An investigative report by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) estimates that over 2,200 teachers have been directly killed by Nigeria's Boko Haram alone, with over 19,000 being displaced and stripped of the ability to deliver on their calling of developing the intellect of the leaders of tomorrow.³⁷ Al-Shabaab goes directly to teachers to kill them for shielding children from forced conscription into their militant rag-tag army.³⁸ The direct fallout from all of these cannot be more palpable and discernible, as there is a systematic thwarting of the entire

³⁵ Ndahi Mahrama, "Terrorised UNIMAID Residents: Eight Boko Haram Attacks in Six Months and a Professor Dead, *Vanguard*, 23 July, 2017.

³⁶ Edith Honan, "Al Shabaab Kills at Least 147 at Kenyan University; Siege Ends," *Reuters*, 2021, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kenya-security-college-idUSKBN0MT0CK20150402>.

³⁷ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, "I Will Never Go Back to School": The Impact of Attacks on Education for Nigerian Women and Girls,' *GCPEA*, 2018, accessed September 30, 2021, <http://74.50.62.37/resources>.

³⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Al-Shabaab: Demanding Children," *Human Rights Watch*, 2018, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/15/somalia-al-shabab-demanding-children>.

apparatus that makes up the entire educational system from the early childhood stage to the citadels of higher learning.

The most apparent is the general instability that all forms of terrorism instigate. No constructive activity, including productive teaching and learning, ideally happens in an atmosphere of chaos. The citizenry becomes apprehensive about carrying out their normal daily functions and refuse to send their children to school. Although it is not in all cases, more often, the places where terrorism are commonplace are where, historically, there are low levels of progress in education and where the inhabitants are less predisposed to things related to knowledge production. Thus, any slightest inconvenience that schooling foments will further fan the embers of apathy toward education. Unfortunately, this time around, we are not dealing with mere "inconvenience" but the lives of innocent children who are at risk. In consequence, it is logically expedient for parents to prevent their children from attending school further. Whenever a school is attacked, either with mass abduction or shooting, schools around that locality, including those in neighboring towns and even states, experience hiccups in their operations. More often, these schools close down for longer periods, leading to serious disruptions to learners' academic stability and proper scholarship.

However, it is not only the parents and elderly ones that get discouraged by terrorist activities, especially those that attack school facilities and education directly. Students themselves lose a great deal of morale toward any form of academic endeavor. It is common that after experiencing terrorist attacks on schools, students who survive largely find it hard to put behind them the emotional and psychological trauma it causes.

In the investigative report by the GCPEA, one of its interviewees, a freed abductee from Boko Haram's Dapchi mass kidnap in Yobe State, categorically stated, “I will never go back to school again.”³⁹ Often, when parents express a hesitation to send their children to school, the children themselves are catalyzed to facilitate their parents' eventual consent. However, when the children convey their reluctance toward academic attainment, stakeholders must know that there is a somewhat insurmountable challenge to the survival of education in that community.

So far, attention has been on the direct fallouts of terrorism on education. Nonetheless, there are indirect and usually less obvious consequences of terrorism and the war on terror on education. One of such is ensuring, albeit circuitously, that the education sector is starved of the necessary resources it requires to operate optimally and deliver on its mandate to equip children with the mental tools needed to function as responsible adults in a globalized world. Nigeria provides an excellent case in point in this regard. Barring the war against terrorism and related insurgencies, the country has no real hostilities it is involved in or committed to. Yet, it spends outsized sums on defense annually, no thanks to terrorism. For the past ten years, an average of 20 percent of Nigeria's Federal Government's appropriation bill or about \$2.3 billion has been taken up by the military, exclusive of other security apparatuses that have their own humungous appropriations.⁴⁰

³⁹ Global Coalition to Protect.

⁴⁰ Kirill Kosenkov, “Nigeria: Armed Conflicts, Military Spending, and the Economic Context,” *Knoema*, 2021, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://knoema.com/infographics/yfkakle/nigeria-armed-conflicts-military-spending-and-the-economic-context#:~:text=Nigeria%2C%20for%20all%20its%20violence,2.2%2D2.3%20billion%20US%20dollars.>

We cannot but mention that the said Nigerian budget is partly financed by a huge deficit, one that is threatening the financial viability of the central government and the country's economic health.⁴¹ The Kenyan government, facing its war with Al-Shabaab, spends about \$1.3 billion on defense, translating to about 7 percent of its total budget.⁴² Mali expends about 14 percent of its budget on fighting the various terrorist groups that plague the country, including the Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa, popularly known as Ansaru and the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP).⁴³ Applying the economic theory of opportunity costs, committing billions to fight insurgency essentially means that critical sectors of the economy, education inclusive, do not get the necessary economic engine they require to survive and operate seamlessly. As a result, funds cannot be deployed to build new schools, employ new competent instructors, facilitate school feeding programs, fund groundbreaking and problem-solving research, and make education more affordable and attractive to the lower-class populace.

By far, the most horrifying implications of terrorism's derailment of education is that terrorism, itself, gets to grow and fester even more in the localities where youngsters

⁴¹ Oladeinde Olawoyin, "Nigeria Invokes 'National Security Threat' to Breach Budget Deficit Limit," *Premium Times*, 2021, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/472254-nigeria-invokes-national-security-threat-to-breach-budget-deficit-limit.html#:~:text=Nigeria's%20budget%20deficit%20is%20projected,%2C%20Zainab%20Ahmed%2C%20has%20said.&text=Mr%20Ahmed%20said%20the%20deficit,in%20the%20sum%20of%20N4>.

⁴² Marco Trends, "Kenya Military Spending/Defense Budget 1963-2021," *MacroTrends*, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/KEN/kenya/military-spending-defense-budget>.

⁴³ Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative, "Mali," *CABRI*, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.cabri-sbo.org/en/our-work/budgets-in-africa/countries/mali>.

are unable to attend schools. It causes grievous harm to the education of youngsters which, in turn, promotes even more terrorism. Therefore, this vicious cycle operates as a self-fulfilling prophecy, making it saddening to state the least. When pupils are put out of school due to terrorist activities, they are mostly left idle with little or no gainful engagements. This saddening atmosphere makes them ready tools for terrorist sects to carry out their evil machinations. These students sometimes become willing and sometimes forced recruits, helping them carry out more devastating attacks that keep others out of school. They are indoctrinated and turned into human shields and suicide bombers. All of these paint a "red-alert" situation. Since education brings about economic transformation, it can be unequivocally said that terrorism is partly frustrating the economic growth quest of many African nations.⁴⁴ Fighting terrorism is not purely about prosecuting armed warfare against insurgents and achieving security; it should be seen as a fight for economic survival, growth, and development.

Whenever such crises as terrorism bedevil any geographic space, there are disproportionate gendered impacts. This state of affairs is greater felt when we discuss the impact of terrorism on education. In essence, the girl-child facing terrorism in Africa is put at an exceeding disadvantage. Already, the number of female children out of school surpasses males by an excessive margin (Human Rights Watch puts the figure at an astonishing 49 million).⁴⁵ Although the data for the boy-child is lacking, one can envisage

⁴⁴ Statista, "Economic Impact of Terrorism In Africa Between 2007 and 2019," *Statista*, 2021, accessed October 14, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1197888/economic-impact-of-terrorism-in-africa/>.

that the number of out-of-school-girl-child would have grown exponentially since various terrorist groups began attaining domination in various pockets of the continent. It is noteworthy that the various terrorist groups specifically target female children and students more in their attacks on schools. For instance, the mass school abductions by Boko Haram, including Chibok and Dapchi, have involved only girls. Reports state that these are later forcefully turned into operatives for the terrorists, including suicide bombers. Thus, in a region where there is extant general disinclination towards girls' schooling, terrorist activities deal a decisive and lethal blow on the aspirations of well-meaning stakeholders to educate and empower the female population.

Terrorism in Africa and all over the world has a potent side, which creates fear in the minds of the average citizens.⁴⁶ Owing to the potentiality of loss of lives and properties, many governments in Africa are forced to put precautions in place and assure their citizens of safety while they work round the clock to end the menace. While this, to some extent, may offer succor to the citizens, it also projects a reality of actual fear in their minds and subtly tells the reality of how movement and activities should be limited. It also tells of how extra caution should be taken, about how security levels should be upgraded, and many more realities of how people's behavior should be watched. The result of these is that many things are affected. For instance, the frequency at which people move to their learning and work is largely affected. While it might be relatively easy to find an alternative

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch, Africa, "Make Girls' Access to Education a Reality," *Human Rights Watch*, 2017, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/16/africa-make-girls-access-education-reality>.

⁴⁶ Charles L. Ruby, "The Definition of Terrorism," *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 2, no. 1 (2002): 9-14.

to one's means of livelihood, with the infrastructure deficit in many African countries, finding an alternative to being educated is not as plausible as it makes the effect of terrorism in Africa a lot spectacular than usual.

As a result of consistent attacks in various African countries, so many structural changes have had to be adapted to accommodate the ongoing situations. Unfortunately, so many African countries do not have solid structural bases to accommodate consistent changes. Given this, the pre-existing structure begins to crumble and this consequently results in deterioration in the value of education. About 600 teachers were killed as a result of Boko Haram insurgent attacks alone⁴⁷ and, even more, were disoriented from continuing to carry on with the business of teaching in schools. All these – added to the already existing problems of education in the country – has made education a foregone endeavor for many people.

Another effect of terrorism on education is an increase in the rate of illiteracy.⁴⁸ As a result of the persistent terrorist attacks on educational institutions, the numerous disruptions in the learning flow have discouraged many individuals from pursuing education. Consequently, the number of illiterates has begun to increase in those areas severely affected by terrorism, thus, creating room for averagely motivated students to drop

⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch, "They Set the Classrooms on Fire," *Human Rights Watch*, 2016, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/04/11/they-set-classrooms-fire/attacks-education-northeast-nigeria>.

⁴⁸ Oryina Michael Orkar, Gabriel Tyungu and Sharmanja Tersoo Solomon, "Examining the Nexus Between Illiteracy and Terrorism in Nigeria: Borno State North-Eastern, Nigeria in Perspective," *International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies* 7, no. 9 (2020): 1-5.

out of school and desperately do anything to keep surviving, including being lured into becoming a part of the terrorist cells in Nigeria.⁴⁹

While all these problems still subsist, the “New Normal” has encroached on African countries and made it urgent to combat terrorism, albeit with a new and dynamic perspective. This is why African countries need to readjust and adopt a new perspective toward the fight against terrorism.

COVID-19 and its Impact on Education

Just as the ongoing global pandemic has affected major sectors of the world, the education sector is certainly no exception. Over the past years, the sector has experienced massive and constant growth globally and has consistently trumped many of its challenges. However, COVID-19 constitutes a challenge facing the education sector which has never been seen before. It has compelled all agents and stakeholders to adjust to the “New Normal”. The pandemic has managed to disrupt the frontiers of learning in Africa by restricting how students can get access to education all over the continent.⁵⁰ The pandemic has had ripple effects on the state of education on the continent and disrupted the lives of students and teachers in various ways, depending on their levels. The Human Rights Watch

⁴⁹ Paul A. Adepelumi, *Psychological Consequences of the Boko Haram Insurgency for Nigerian Children* (Walden Dissertation and Doctoral Studies: Walden University, 2018).

⁵⁰ Wondwosen Tamrat and Damtew Teferra, "COVID-19 Poses a Serious Threat to Higher Education: Africa's Challenges, Responses, and Apprehensions," *International Higher Education* 10, 2 (2020): 28-30.

research study conducted across various African countries indicates that pre-existing factors aggravated the closure of schools caused by COVID-19.⁵¹

As at the time of writing this piece, it has been reported that the pandemic has resulted in the shutting down of schools in about 215 nations⁵² No doubt, the closure of schools, due to the global pandemic, has brought about a massive disruption to education across Africa, the most affected groups being children who were, earlier mentioned, already deprived of quality education. After the outbreak of the virus in March 2020, and the health authorities established that the spread of the pandemic is being expanded by social and physical interactions, it became necessary that interactions, especially among school children who, more often than not, throw caution to the wind, were limited. The limitation of these interactions was achieved by the closure of schools across many African countries. Following the closure of schools as a health measure and in light of deficient infrastructure provision for virtual schooling in several African countries, many children across the continent stopped receiving education.⁵³ As expected, when students are kept out of school, the consequences are often beyond normal. For one, the children and the parents who initially are not deeply motivated to receive a formal education are pulled back

⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, "Impact of COVID-19 on Children's Education in Africa," *Human Rights Watch*, 2020, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/26/impact-covid-19-childrens-education-africa>.

⁵² Abdullahi Aborode, Olaitan Anifowoshe, Tolorunloju Ayodele, Akinjo Rebecca and Ogunjemilua Oluwafemi, "Impact of COVID-19 on Education in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Preprints*, 2020, accessed September 30, 2021, www.preprints.org, doi:10.20944/preprints202007.0027.v1.

⁵³ Wondwosen Tamrat and Damtew Teferra, "COVID-19 Poses a Serious Threat to Higher Education: Africa's Challenges, Responses, and Apprehensions," *International Higher Education* 10, no. 2 (2020): 28-30.

and rerouted to other endeavors capable of keeping them engaged and fulfilling the necessities for daily survival. Where this continues for long, the need to receive any form of education is dropped in its entirety and the crop of uneducated and enslaved minds grows higher.

True, higher education in Africa has always been in dire need of urgency and internal and external interventions. But, even more, the pandemic was poised to aggravate the precarious status quo. For an educational system that was barely surviving through the thick and thin of rapid growth in the world's educational outlook, having a pandemic slow down or halt its pace had an unprecedented effect. In a bid to salvage what was left of the academic year, institutions such as private secondary schools and universities in Nigeria, for example, began to adopt distance learning models. This was carried out mainly over the internet, using video conferencing, collaborations, and communications software amongst other programs that enhance virtual learning. Though this virtual learning model seemed to work in the country's private schools, the government-owned universities aimed to equally implement it and bring back students to learning, even though they were out of the four walls of the traditional classrooms. However, this brought to the fore the crushing inequality that defines everyday Africa and creates massive divides between the haves and the have-nots. Moreover, unlike face-to-face interactions, virtual learning requires that students own some seemingly basic electronic gadgets required to receive transmission to connect to teaching online. However, due to the endemic poverty level, these basic gadgets are somewhat beyond the reasonable reach of most African students, particularly those who study in public institutions. Thus, there was a situation where a small cohort of young African people could easily afford the basic needs for the education of the future or had

easy access to them through their institutions, while a larger crop, overwhelming majority of their peers, found it extremely difficult to get hold of these tools. Moreover, the perennial problems of electricity and the high cost of connectivity and data in countries like Nigeria also aggravated the predicament of the students and their instructors.

The level of dichotomy that will set a generation of Africans apart for many years to come may be unfathomable. However, this split in the circumstances and future of African youngsters is not the only problematic feature of online-based learning. The implementation of virtual education in most African schools has been nothing short of dismal, as fewer topics and less content are taught, with the students becoming responsible for their education. A *Human Rights Watch* study enumerates the effects of all these on the mental and emotional health of the African student.⁵⁴ The study notes that it was not hard to find students who suffered from anxiety, depression, isolation, and even stress on the continent, all emanating from the uncertainties that COVID-19-induced remote education has fostered. Where all these problems occur, it is impossible to vouch for education.

Besides the above, the effects of the pandemic have also taken a toll on the integrity of education in Africa. For starters, the absence of real-time interactions between learners and teachers, as it used to be known, has drastically reduced the passion that is always put into the transfer and receipt of knowledge between the two groups. Since many teaching and learning frameworks in the usual school settings no longer apply, there is less motivation to ensure best practices of good school teaching and learning during virtual

⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch, “Impact of COVID-19 on Children’s Education in Africa,” *Human Rights Watch*, 2020, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/26/impact-covid-19-childrens-education-africa>.

schooling. This explains why there is a decrease in the commitment given to academic work by students. This situation triggered the exhibitions of other factors which are inimical to maintaining the integrity of education in Africa. For instance, there were reports of a rise in unethical academic behaviors such as contract cheating. This involves students outsourcing their academic coursework to other people to help them complete with the agreement to pay upon completion. The pandemic also fostered cheating in exams for students, since there were hardly any mechanisms put in place to ensure that students stayed in line with the expected ethical behavior of academics while writing exams. This integrity of education was also smeared during the pandemic when it was observed that the focus on excellent academic performance was shifted by students who had easily found attention in the mundane and had reduced the level of intensity paid to academic pursuit.

While these effects can still be easily managed with students of institutions of higher learning, hardly can the same be said of students at lower levels of education, especially those in the formative stage of learning and involvement in formal education. For instance, one could assume that the effect the pandemic had on early childhood education programs in Africa is greater than it had on programs of higher institutions. The truth is that for the childhood educational program, there was no way a virtual system of learning could be adopted to continue education. The implication is that the more the pandemic lingers, the longer the pupils will be forced to stay at home and out of school. The gravity of these is seen when one considers that the early childhood program is supposed to lay a solid educational background for African children. After all, Robert Fulghum's famous credo, "All I really need to learn I learned in kindergarten" is true when one considers the cognitive power attributive to early childhood experience. No doubt, during early

childhood learning, an African child begins to develop literacy and numerical ability and skills which go a long way to determine the child's performance later in life. This same situation is applicable albeit with lesser gravity at other levels of educational training, like the primary and secondary schools, which have also been affected by the pandemic and have largely been under lock and key.

In all, the effects of COVID-19 on education in African countries, though largely detrimental to academic learning, have exposed many inadequacies in Africa's educational system. The feebleness of the fabrics of educational infrastructure on the continent creates its tendencies to easily fall off upon an unexpected pressure such as a pandemic like COVID-19. Besides, the effects have already shown how, due to the neglect of the education sector, there are quantifiable implications on the future of education on the continent. While the effects of the pandemic still linger, a radical shift must be made against the status quo. The truth is that the pandemic has exposed the inadequacies of education and further changed the outlook toward education so much that it has become impossible to tackle the problems with the same level of feeble dedication and porous strategies of the past. There is now a "New Normal" created by the pandemic which the perspective of tackling the endemic problems of education in Africa must align with to make headway.

The New Normal and the Future of Education in Africa

COVID-19 is not the first epidemic that the world has faced in recent years. Africa, in particular, has had its fair share of fast-spreading, highly contagious, viruses like the

Ebola virus in the past.⁵⁵ However, the currently ravaging pandemic is on a scale that is beyond comprehension, given that other epidemics were eradicated without far-reaching changes to the daily lives of the majority of African people. COVID-19, with its ravaging speed and global spread, promises to do that and even more than far-reaching changes to the daily lives of the African people, as the statistics have demonstrated the impact of the pandemic on the overall socio-political economy of Africa.⁵⁶ The effects on education have clearly shown that there has to be a revamp of the current educational system in Africa. This is so that it will not just compete with other standard educational systems across the world but will be flexible enough to adjust to emergencies such as the one created by coronavirus without necessarily having ripple effects on the progress and trajectory of learning on the continent. In this light, it is important to work toward fitting the educational system of Africa into the operations of a “New Normal”.

As talks about a "New Normal" in the way we work, live and carry out almost every other activity increase, the education of the present and next generation of Africans should not be left out. The pandemic has proven that it is practically impossible to slow down the changes and transformations currently happening to education in Africa. At best,

⁵⁵ Jana M. Broadhurst, Tim J.G. Brooks and Nira R. Pollock, “Diagnosis of Ebola Virus Disease: Past, Present, and Future,” *Clinical Microbiology Reviews* 29, no. 4 (2016): 773–793.

⁵⁶ Anietie Ewang and Jim Wormington, *Between Hunger and the Virus: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on People Living in Poverty in Lagos, Nigeria* (Lagos: Human Rights Watch, 2021); Pádraig Carmody and Gerard McCann, *COVID-19 in the Global South: Impacts and Responses* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2020) and Addis Getachew, “Africa Suffers ‘Devastating Impact’ of COVID-19,” *Anadolu Agency*, 2021, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/africa-suffers-devastating-impact-of-covid-19/2136074>.

what can be done is to put in modalities to deal with and fit into many of these changes so that African students will not be left out of receiving uninterrupted and quality education in learning institutions across African countries. Failure to flow with the times and adapt may result in problems of catastrophic proportions on the continent.

In fitting into these changes, some critical questions need to be asked and answered. These will give possible responses to the changes currently coursing through the continent's educational system via three main prisms:

- In this post covid era, where and how will educational learning take place? What will a "classroom" entail? Also, who and what will be the agents of education?
- How can the educational system prepare African students for life beyond school examinations, especially as we know them?
- How do we combat the challenges of inequality within and outside the four walls of the classroom?⁵⁷

- *Where and how will educational learning take place? Also, who will the agents of education involve?*

One thing to admit is the fact that the pandemic has completely disrupted the mode of learning. There is now a complete dynamic as to *the-where-and-the-how of learning*.

⁵⁷ Harry Quilter-Pinner, and Anna Ambrose, "The 'New Normal': the Future of Education after COVID-19," *IPPR, 2020*, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/the-new-normal>.

Since the pandemic broke out, there have been jurisprudential, technical, and social debates about what the classroom means. Our aim is not to interrogate the still unfolding polemics but to deal with the reverberation from this “New Normal”. From this point forward, the classroom will look different from what it used to be, with the only classroom idea that students in the future may know being their laptops and other technological gadgets. To cope with this state of affairs, the teaching and learning content, methodology, and systems may need some overhaul to fit the new medium of knowledge transfer.

However, this new state will take some time before completely unraveling and taking center stage. In essence, we may not have the complete iteration of the "future of education," as fast-tracked by the pandemic for some years or, worse still, a couple of decades. In the meantime, there is a lot of potential for applying technology within the somewhat, albeit, modified traditional system of schooling. Technology can give students access to an endless trove of information beyond what may be physically available within their classrooms or school environments. It can broaden the horizon, reach, and sense of possibility of these students. In an era where inclusivity is becoming a global mantra, there is no better approach to achieving that in education than putting technology in the central stage of learning.

For all of these benefits to be realized, several modalities have to be put in place. African schools largely lack the tools of basic technological and digital interaction in the information technology age. As such, the first port of call to harnessing technology to better education as well as the future of the average African is to make these facilities available in their schools. Then, there is a need to modernize the traditional school curriculum from

a merely theoretical approach to a more practical one, which is what a technology-driven educational system supports, regardless of discipline or field of study.

Achieving this will also mean a closure of the poverty gap that exists in Africa, as the adoption of technology in the learning mode requires every learner to be carried along to achieve equal learning opportunities. To do this, the endemic poverty and the problem of access to the things that ease adoption have to be solved. The gap between the haves and have-nots has to be addressed so that relatively everyone can afford the things necessary for the smooth use and adoption of technology in education.

- *How can our educational system prepare students for life beyond just passing certificated examinations?*

There is no doubt that the current educational system has done a lot – in its own accord – to prepare students for living in real life. However, recent experiences and exposure to the 21st-century realities have shown that these preparations might not be enough to meet the demands of the future of work and the realities of societies. Examinations and assessments have been the bedrock of educational systems all over the globe for several centuries, with the former being utilized to determine whether students have learned their coursework in a manner sufficient for them to proceed to the advanced phases of education. Both of them are the mechanisms used to grant diplomas, degrees, and other instruments of certifications to students. However, the pandemic changed schooling, which has had attendant effects on the conception and implementation of what we used to know as examinations. In the past, the subsisting approach was for students to

pass through rote learning and then be given to regurgitate what they have supposedly learned in closely monitored and invigilated examination halls without recourse to help or assistance. Today, students do not necessarily have to be physically situated on their respective campuses to receive instructions with the “New Normal”. What they merely need are gadgets that can connect them to other parts of the world. This has significant implications on the organization, conduct, sanctity, and credibility of examinations.

Examinations are used to derive their credibility from the close oversight on the examination premises. This is bound to change. Education becoming borderless means that, going forward, students do not need to converge on the campus to get their assessments written. This throws up some interesting questions, one of which borders on how grossly unequipped schools on the continent conduct credible examinations in a virtual era while guaranteeing accountability and transparency. There is the need to scrutinize the abiding, traditional technique of doing things to incorporate the "New Normal" into the conception and execution of examinations on the continent.

It is important that the necessary policies that will support the establishment of a system that accommodates credible conduct of the New Normal virtual examinations and the infrastructure that will trigger ease in conducting these examinations in preparation for real-life are put in place in Africa. There is no denying that in many African countries the level of infrastructure that fosters easy learning and teaching is either absent or inadequate. It, therefore, means that before the continent’s educational system can key into the New Normal and implement the changes it brings, the endemic problem of infrastructure has to be addressed. This, one way or the other, calls for political in the form of an increased devotion of resources in the educational system. Where there are enough resources,

necessary policies to trigger the change, implementation, and monitoring of the identified changes, there is bound to be an improvement in the outlook of Africa's educational system.

- How do we combat the challenges of inequality within and outside the four walls of the classroom?

Ideally, remote learning has the propensity to bridge the inequalities in education on the continent. With virtual education, students from Ibadan can access lectures at the University of Nairobi without any hitches. This has consequent effects on the robustness of knowledge that will emanate from the continent. African colleges, in particular, are known to be relatively reserved on education diversity since students find it excruciatingly difficult to cross countries in search of education, except in extreme circumstances. Remote education can remove these barriers and make cross-border education seamless on the continent. What better way to foster and facilitate the African Continental Trade Area (AFCTA) than making it easy for members of Africa's next generation to access the same institutions without any barriers? Another way remote education can bring about greater equity and diversity is to make education cheaper and more accessible. What this means is that those who might have been deprived of quality learning due to a range of financial, physical, and socio-economic factors can now have full access to it. For instance, persons with disabilities, whom we have in large quantities on the continent,⁵⁸ may not have to go

⁵⁸ Disability News: Africa, "Disabled World." *Disabled World*, accessed September 17, 2021, <https://www.disabled-world.com/news/africa/>.

through the agonizing experience of attending school in the traditional educational settings.⁵⁹

However, despite the promises of mitigating inequality in education in Africa, it appears remote education achieved the opposite, as only a few Africans attended institutions that had virtual learning capabilities. Furthermore, even if the institutions could facilitate online teaching, many Africans faced the challenge of access to the devices that would enable them to participate in virtual education. This underscores the need for all hands to be on deck to provide academic, financial, and social support to close this gap. Remote learning can reduce Africa's inequality problems by further broadening access to education. Access to the gadgets and technology that facilitate learning should not be permitted to debilitate against this lofty goal.

Conclusion

By and large, this Convocation Lecture has addressed the situation of Africa regarding terrorism and the pandemic. Two problems have been highlighted as those aggravating the comatose condition of Africa's economy. The effects of the pandemic on education in Africa and its direct responsibility in the spread of terrorism have also been discussed. Terrorism has been discussed as having a huge impact on the future of education in Africa and it is important – now that the world is in the “New Normal,” for African countries to adjust to the new perspectives to fit into a new world of possibilities.

⁵⁹ Corey Mitchell, “Bridging Distance for Learners with Special Needs,” *EducationWeek, 2020*, accessed September 17, 2021, <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/bridging-distance-for-learners-with-special-needs/2020/09>.

The Convocation Lecture will conclude on the dire need of the continent to provide answers to germane questions like what the future holds for its youngsters in the educational sector towards preparing them for life after school. Throughout the lecture, our attention was brought to how, in keying to the “New Normal,” Africa has to prepare a new and robust method of educating its citizens and retraining the agents responsible for passing across knowledge so that there can be a seamless transformation into the “New Normal.” Finally, the lecture has addressed how our attention should not be lost on the possibility of inequalities springing up, how to tackle the menace headlong as agents of change and create a continent with equal opportunities for all, despite keying into the “New Normal.” The good news is that COVID-19 has come with a new global worldview of work and lifestyle. And in revamping its education for transformation, there is a window of opportunity for Africa to take advantage of today’s global information technology access.

Thank you.