Utilization of Electronic Platforms for Effective Distance Learning Among Business Education Postgraduates' Students in Rivers State Universities

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Abstract
The purpose of the study was to determine the utilization of electronic platforms for effective distance learning among Business education postgraduates' students in Rivers State Universities. The research design adopted for the study was a descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised 174 postgraduate students of Business Education from Rivers States Universities, A census sampling techniques was adopted for this study. The instrument was validated by three experts, two Business Educators and one expert from Measurement and Evaluation. The researchers developed 16 item structured questionnaires titled Utilization of electronic Platforms for Effective Distance Learning of Business Education Postgraduate Students Questionnaire, which was used to collect data for the study. The study adopted a 4-point rating scale weighted 4,3,2,1, with options of High Extent (4), Moderate Extent (3), Low Extent (2) and Very Low Extent (1). Two research purposes, questions and hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The data collected was analyzed using Mean and Standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistical tool to determine the difference in their mean responses of the RSU and IAUOE Business Education postgraduates with respect to the independent and dependent variables. It revealed that most of the electronic platforms are used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning among Business education postgraduate students in Rivers state had been underutilized and that challenges faced by students as a means of adopting the most effective and efficient electronic platforms are used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning among Business education postgraduate students in Rivers state are still very numerous and as such adequate attention must be given and it was recommended that Curriculum designers and planners should ensure that usage of electronic platform orientation cut across all faculties, to enable students know how to use it, since it is the present day trend in the educational sector and the society at large. Since the usage level is still very low among Nigeria higher institutions, Government, Non-governmental organizations and Educational institutions should make adequate provision for the various instructional media that will help

integrate E-learning platforms fully to make teaching and learning effective and efficient, since it is vital to both teacher, students and society at large etc.

Introduction

The utilization of electronic platforms among students is becoming more vocal than expected, with the recent global pandemic that never gave way for conventional or traditional classroom learning to take place in the various higher institutions in the world. However, some universities in Nigeria were able carryon teaching and learning process which shows that they have embraced e-learning as a means to ensure that their academic calendar is not totally distorted. Some universities have devised the means of using information and communication technology tools to facilitate learning during this pandemic. Several e-learning platforms have been adopted by higher institutions although these platforms which includes, Zoom, Microsoft teams, google hangout (meet), skype, Facebook, Instagram, Bamboo learning, google classroom, WhatsApp, WIZIQ, Adobe captivate, Blackboard learn amongst others. Any time e-learning platforms are proper utilized to meet up societal demand of both the students and the institution, learning can be said to be effectively managed. Higher institutions were shut down during this Covid-19 period because some universities were not prepared for Business education students at any level, student population maybe too high to managed, some institutions running Business education only used the traditional classroom method, both lecturers and students need to be trained first, stable internet facilities, amongst other facilities needed.

Electronic platforms were effectively integrated into Business education programme in Nigeria through the adoption of computer equipped classroom etc. Integrating electronic into Business education programmes effectively boosted curriculum planning, development and implementation through the development and use of multimedia and other computer equipment relevant to teaching-learning activities. Computer equipment needed in integration of e-learning into Business Education programmes include flash memories, optical discs, interactive electronic boards, video books, personal computers, multimedia projectors, etc. On the other hand, Multimedia resources used in e-learning include Learning Activity Package (LAP), diskettes, power point slides etc. These course wares may be developed by the teacher or exist as ready-made instructional software, (Chriatian, Onyema & Akiti,2019).

Business education as a programme of instruction prepares graduates with skills to function effectively and efficiently, in their area of specialization and the society at large. The department of Business Education Rivers State was learning using ZOOM platform during the COVID-19 outbreak, this shows that business education in many part of Nigeria are always well-prepared to meet up the world present trend in teaching and learning. According to Eduventure (2019), in the United States of America, about 15% of the total undergraduate students are enrolled for online learning and distance learning. Developed economies such as Canada, United Kingdom and United States have experienced a decline in their educational revenue as foreign students either quit their studies or were sent back home.

The digital transformation system called E-learning has help the teaching and learning to be modified from face-faced system to distance learning, which gives the instructor and the learner a flexible, reliable system to learn from the comfort of their home. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the closing of classrooms all over the world and forced 1.5 billion students and 63 million educators to suddenly modify their face-to-face academic practices, to distance learning using E-platforms wherever possible (Sarka,2015). Nwagwu and Azil, (2016), deefine e-learning as the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance and or support learning in tertiary education. E-learning involves the use of electronic media to enhance learning including digital collaboration, satellite broadcasting, CD-ROMS, video and audio conferencing, mobile technology, interactive TV and web based technologies (Bennink, 2014). Lynch (2013) noted that e-learning as a component of flexible learning is a wide set of applications and processes, which use all available electronic media to deliver education and training. Sangrà, Vlachopoulos, and Cabrera,(2012) found four general categories of definitions of e-learning: (1) Technology-driven: Use of technology to deliver learning and training programs; (2) delivery-system-oriented: The delivery of a learning, training, or education program by electronic means; (3) communication-oriented: Learning facilitated by the use of digital tools and content that involves some form of interactivity, which may include online interaction between the learner and their teacher or peers; and (4) educational-paradigm-oriented: Information and communication technologies used to support students to improve their learning. Rodrigues, Almeida, Figueiredo, Lopes, (2015) defined e-learning as an innovative web-based system based on digital technologies and other forms of educational materials whose primary goal is to provide students with a personalized, learner-centered, open, enjoyable, and interactive learning environment supporting and enhancing the learning processes. The American Society for Training and Development's definition of e-Learning covers a wide set of applications and processes, such as Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaboration. It includes the delivery of content via Internet, intranet/extranet (LAN/WAN), audio-and videotape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, and CD-ROM. E-learning learning is the process of using technological means to make the process of learning to take using a computer, smart phone and other gadgets in a classroom or from a distance place.

E-learning platforms essential for the organizing and managing Business education

Webinars/ Web based Learning: This type of E- learning is used for online a seminar which involves audio and video and help in reducing high of participant instead of travelling.

Video Conferencing: This allows as many users to be connected to a particular source for collaborative communication base on the content. It is very suitable for distance and self-paced learning. With the use of video conferencing in business education, the barrier of traditional method of learning is removed and this goes a long way to favour the goal of inclusive education. This is possible because video conferencing integrates video and audio to connect users anywhere in the world as if they were in the same classroom

YouTube: The site allows for registered users to upload and have available for the public their videos for viewing. In that case, the teachers of business education and students who desire to use YouTube have to register online which is usually free. The teacher thereafter prepares the desired lessons including videos and upload online for the students to read. Anyone who goes

to the site can view the lessons and videos that are posted on this site. The students also have the opportunities of having access to other important literature.

SMART Board interactive whiteboard: An interactive whiteboard is a large interactive display that connects to a computer and projector. This is highly suitable for students' project, presentations and seminars. A projector projects the computer's desktop onto the board's surface where users control the computer using a pen, finger, stylus, or other device. The board is typically mounted to a wall or floor stand. They are used in a variety of settings, including classrooms at all levels of education, in corporate board rooms and work groups. Instructions in business education can be transmitted through this mode. It is impossible to apply all these packages to business education programme in one setting.

Flexible Learning Toolboxes: A Toolbox is a collection of high quality resources, suggested learning strategies and supporting material to support online delivery of recognized training packages which could be suitable for learning. They are high quality, cost effective interactive e-learning and assessment resources featuring scenarios, images and activities and support online delivery of recognized training packages for any training imaginable. Use of Flexible Learning Toolboxes in business education could motivate new students into the programme and also help the old ones to learn at their own pace. Teachers and trainers can use Toolbox materials to support traditional classroom delivery or as a learning object to help them deliver learning contents. Learning materials can also be customized to suit different learner's needs and interest at any time

Zoom application: This E-learning have attractive learning features, its make learning more interactive, it's save time and help learner to access learning as long as there is network.

Facebook: This platform gives room for people to meet on line from different countries to communicate, classes can also be fixed through group.

WhatsApp application: lecture can take place and materials can also be deliver to students at ease from the comfort of your home, it is more economical and allows students to access the materials at their own time for both video and audio.

Computer-Based Training (CBT): All that is needed is a computer, a projector, scanner and multimedia objects such as audio, video and speakers for the transmission of learning contents or it could be delivered over the Internet as Web-based training. CBT can be used to teach business education because it is especially good for keyboarding, word processing, information management, business mathematics amongst other subjects.

Business Education as a programme of instruction in the institution of higher learning is highly affected by the issue of corona virus. Godpower, (2017) defined Business Education as a process of building skills, knowledge, ethics, values and attitude that will help an individual to be able to face life challenges around them and function effectively as an entrepreneur, professional teachers and function as operators in organizations such as: Accountants, Managers, marketers, secretaries, Teachers, Entrepreneurs, etc, Okute (2018), Business Education is a training system that will make him/her fit into the world of work.

Statement of problem

E-learning platforms remain the best alternative in the organizing and managing of Business education in Nigeria, especially when there are challenges that discourages the traditional classroom settings. The current issue of covid-19 is a global challenge which has hinders the teaching and learning process, many institutions that try to use E-platforms or technology as a means of continuing the teaching and learning process, but it may be having one limitation or the other which tend to affect the purpose of learning of effective teaching and learning. Some of the major challenges faced by students are; poor network, high cost of data, epileptic power supply in some area, and attitude of other students during classes, the best E-platforms to adopt as a suitable means was also a problem. Also within this period many persons have lost their jobs especial for the workers in the private sector, some placed on half and even quarter salaries raising the issue of social economic and psychological problems people are going through. These that lost their jobs in this pandemic having children and relatives in higher institutions put them in a more serious financial mess. With the present economic and financial turmoil; how can learning take place in the pandemic period with poor family, schools lock down without payment of school fees, and with the near absence e-learning infrastructure put in place prior to Covid 19 period? Even with the schools that can and are running online learning programme within this period; how effective is this programme. Are they meeting the aims and objectives in deploying such technology at this period? What are issues and challenges being experienced as a result of this sudden switch in adopting to e-learning technology (system) as a means of continuing learning in the midst of covid 19 pandemic. This research examines the utilization of e-learning platforms and distance learning as a mean of organizing and managing of Business education in challenging time.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate Utilization of electronic platforms for effective distance learning among Business education postgraduates' students in Rivers State Universities. Specifically, the study attempted to:

1. Determine the utilization of electronic platforms for effective distance learning among Business education postgraduate students.
2. Determine the challenges faced by students as a means of adopting the most effective and efficient electronic platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of Business education postgraduate students.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised for the study:

1. What are the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state?
2. What are the challenges faced by students as a means of adopting the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated at 0.05 level of significance to guide the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Rivers state university (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru university of education (IAUOE) post-graduate business education students on the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Rivers state university (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru university of education (IAUOE) post-graduate business education students on the challenges faced by students as a means of adopting the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for the study was a survey research design which established the difference in E-learning platforms and effective distance learning for organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in RSU and IAUOE which is aim at increasing the rate of E-learning efficiency in Business Education in Rivers State. The population of the study comprised of 176 Business Education current postgraduate students from Rivers state owned Universities offering Business Education. The entire population of 176 Business Education postgraduate students was used for the analysis of the study, meaning that census sampling technique was used. The researchers developed 16 item structured questionnaires titled E-learning platforms and effective distance learning for organizing and managing of business education postgraduates' students in Rivers state universities (EPEDLOMBEPSRSQ) for data collection of the study. The study adopted a 4-point rating scale weighted 4,3,2,1. The spans options are High Extent (4), Moderate Extent (3), Low Extent (2) and Very Low Extent (1). The data collected were organized and analysed around the research questions and the hypotheses formulated to guide the study. The research questions were answered using the weighted mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistical tool to determine the difference in the mean response of RSU and IAUOE Business Education postgraduates with respect to E-learning platforms and distance learning. The decision rule stands to accept points up to 2.5 and above for the research questions, null hypotheses was accepted when the t-calculated is lesser than the t-critical value, if otherwise rejected.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state?
Table 1: Response on extent the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state.

S/N	ITEMS	RSU =64			IAUE= 112		
		$\bar{x}$	S.D	Remark	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Remark
1.	Zoom application	3.78	0.49	HE	3.53	0.54	HE
2.	Flexible Learning Toolboxes	1.86	1.85	LE	1.97	0.85	LE
3	Whatsapp application	3.65	0.42	HE	3.54	0.45	HE
4	Facebook application	3.08	0.35	HE	3.19	0.33	HE
5	Youtube application	3.00	1.00	HE	2.99	0.85	HE
6	Video conferencing application	2.70	0.55	ME	2.66	0.61	ME
7	Webinar learning application	2.22	0.72	LE	2.33	0.65	LE
8	Smart Board interactive whiteboard	3.32	0.48	ME	3.20	0.51	ME
	Grand mean & S.D	**2.95**	**0.67**	LE	**2.93**	**0.56**	LE

Responses, from table 1 above had a grand mean of 2.95, 2.93 with a standard deviation of 0.67, 0.56 which indicates that most of the E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state had been underutilized and calls for serious attention if E-learning must be fully adopted in Business education.

Research Question 2:
To what extent does the challenges faced by students as a means of adopting the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state?
Table 2: Response on extent of the challenges faced by students as a means of adopting the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state.

S/N	ITEMS	RSU =64			IAUE= 112		
		$\bar{x}$	S.D	Remark	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Remark
1.	The cost of running the system is too expensive	3.77	0.47	HE	3.29	0.86	HE
2.	Prefer the physical traditional classroom learning environment	3.12	0.72	HE	3.00	0.89	HE
3	Some students do not have smart phone or laptop	1.34	1.67	VLE	1.19	0.83	VLE

4	Poor network challenges at times during lectures	3.05	0.80	HE	3.03	0.88	HE
5	Students learn better from peer when they are together	3.63	0.32	HE	3.45	0.91	HE
6	The E-learning enhance students' learning behaviours	2.68	1.21	ME	2.22	0.84	ME
7	Effective learning is not taking place because of the distraction from the environment	2.97	1.68	ME	2.21	0.87	ME
8	Have Access to free internet facilities	1.12	1.89	HE	1.28	0.86	VLE
	Grand mean & S.D	**2.71**	**0.98**	**HE**	**2.33**	**0.87**	**ME**

With a high grand mean of 2.71, 0.98 and a standard deviation of 0.98, 87 in table 2, which is above average, this is of a clear indication that challenges faced by students as a means of adopting the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state are still very numerous and as such adequate attention must be given.

Hypotheses 1

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Rivers state university (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru university of education (IAUOE) post-graduate business education students on the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state.

Table 3: T-test analysis of the mean response on the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state.

Response Decision	X	Sd.	N	df.	Std. error	P	t.cal	t-crit.
RSU	2.95	0.67	64					
				174	0.78	0.05	0.20	1.645 Accept H0:
IAUOE	2.93	0.56	112					

Decision: Accept hypothesis

Analysis of data in table 3 shows a t-calculated value of 0.20 with a 174 degree of freedom at 0.05% level of significance. The calculated t-value of (0.20) is less than the t-critical value of 1.645, therefore the null hypothesis was accepted, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of Rivers state university (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru university of education (IAUOE) post-graduate business education students on the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state.

Hypotheses 2

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of Rivers state university (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru university of education (IAUOE) post-graduate business education students on the challenges faced by students as a means of adopting the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the mean response on the challenges faced by students as a means of adopting the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state

Response	X	Sd.	N	df.	Std. error	P	t.cal	t-crit.	Decision
RSU	2.71	0.98	64						
				174	0.22	0.05	2.58	1.645	Accept H0:
IAEOE	2.33	0.87	112						

Decision: Accept hypothesis:

Analysis of data in table 3 shows a t-calculated value of 2.58 at 174 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. The calculated t-value of (2.52) is greater than the t-critical value of 1.645, therefore the null hypothesis was accepted, there is significant difference in the mean responses of Rivers state university (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru university of education (IAUOE) post-graduate business education students on the challenges faced by students as a means of adopting the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state

CONCLUSION

most of the E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state had been underutilized and calls for serious attention if E-learning must be fully adopted in business education our research question 1 is in line with research conducted by Eze, Chinedu-Eze and Bello,(2018) which the findings indicate that 89% of participants agree that there are sufficient e-learning facilities for use; the facilities are user friendly and the facilitates help to significantly improve learning. However, 72% of the participants indicated that the attitudes of users, inadequate Internet facility and inadequate training are major inhibitors. Also with the work of Dhume, Gondkar, Murgaiah, and Sub has,(2016) E-learning has numerous advantages

over the traditional method of teaching/learning. Despite these advantages however, the diffusion of e-Learning in business education is rather slow or imaginary in Nigeria E-learning involves the use of technology to enhance learning including digital collaboration, satellite broadcasting, CD-ROMS, video and audio conferencing, mobile technology, interactive TV and web based technologies (Nwagwu and Azil, 2016). Aparicio, Bacao, & Oliveira,(2016). Students are faced with the problem of poor network, poor learning environment and that the cost of running the system is too expensive, this agree with our research questions 2 on the challenges faced by students as a means of adopting the most effective and efficient E-learning platforms used in teaching and learning in effective distance learning for the organizing and managing of business education postgraduate students in Rivers state are still very numerous and as such adequate attention must be given. Our research revealed that ZOOM is the most used application E-learning platform in recent times.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were drawn:

(a)   Curriculum designers and planners should ensure that usage of E-learning platform orientation cut across all faculties, to enable students know how to use it, since it is the present day trend in the educational sector and the society at large.

(b)   Since the usage level is still very low among Nigeria higher institutions, Government, Non-governmental organizations and Educational institutions should make adequate provision for the various instructional media that will help integrate E-learning platforms fully to make teaching and learning effective and efficient, since it is vital to both teacher, students and society at large.

(c)   Training should be provided to lecturers and students on how to use some of the new E-learning platforms, instructional media technologies and its maintenance to help teaching delivering better and increase students' performance.

(d)   Lecturers should attend workshops, seminars, conferences to acquaint themselves with the present skills regarding to E-learning platforms and distance learning which in turn can prepare the students for the world of work after graduation.

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