



BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE UTILIZATION OF ONLINE PLATFORMS FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT IN RIVERS STATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The integration of assessment via an online platform was introduced recently by the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) to ensure accurate assessment of students seeking admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This has proved effective to a large extent, but continuity is key to any development process. Students' examinations in tertiary institutions are mostly done using conventional paper-pen approach. One reason for slow adoption of online assessments may be students' perception of the whole process. The purpose of this study was to determine how business education students perceived the utilization of online platform for educational assessment. The population of the study was made up of 1,109 business education students in Rivers State University, out of which 844 were selected as sample for the study using purposive sampling technique. Descriptive survey design was adopted as three research questions guided the study and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 levels of significance. A questionnaire developed by the researchers was used for the data collection. Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the reliability of the instrument which yielded a coefficient of 0.78. Descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, percentages, and charts were used to answer the research questions while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis. The results showed that the students experienced difficulties in the utilization of the online assessment platforms. Also, the students agreed to the adoption of online assessments in business education. It was recommended that; the management of Rivers State University should reintroduce online assessment which was stopped in 2016; that training on online assessment utilization be conducted for Business Educators to equip them with the right kind of skills to adopt online assessment approach rather than paper-pen approach.



Introduction

The emergence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the ubiquitous relationship of the internet and networks improve man's ingenuity and opportunities given that societies consciously depend on real time information to be proactive and to discount the effect of environmental changes (Eze & Chinedu-Eze, 2018; Al-Gahtani, 2016). The development of web browsers and tools has enabled the wider use of the internet for learning and teaching. The process of evaluating students' knowledge is a complex one and often times, resource consuming. These processes can be eased up by taking advantage of the new technologies such as computer-based assessment system. Institutions that often time attempt to cope with the dynamism of the society and the constant changes in the educational process, have always made huge investments in the state of the art ICT platforms owing to the need to build competitive advantage amidst decreasing cost of technologies in the contemporary information systems market and world of education.

The integration of assessment via an online platform was introduced recently by the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) to ensure accurate assessments of students seeking admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This has proved effective to a large extent but continuity is key to any development process. Students' examinations in tertiary institutions are mostly done using conventional paper-pen approach. Online assessment platforms are some of the most significant educational innovations driven by expanding array of technology enabled platforms that offer potential learners an alternative and innovative learning environment compared with traditional learning and thus, represents IT-based innovation in education (Wang, 2009). While some use online learning platforms to refer to pieces of content packaged using technical infrastructures, others consider it an online self-study and yet others see it as encompassing an on-going learning and joint effort. Online learning is a learning process that involves the connection of digitally based content (Zhang, Lu & Boutaba 2010).

Online assessment is a useful strategy that can be introduced into the general educational spectrum to further enhance and accelerate the pace of Nigerian educational growth and development. Online assessment is a novel approach to student assessment that pertains to process of tutoring, mentoring, and evaluating the level of students' educational attainment and academic achievement through the use of information technology. Some of these possible online assessment platforms according to Ipaye (2011) include; websites, wikis, blogs, second life, e-mail, twitters, course management systems, video/audio podcasts, Facebook, threaded



discussion list, video/audio text chat, videoconferences software, among others. Online assessment could be perceived as a productive method that advances self-study and continuous testing and developmental assessment of students within the formal education spectrum. The use of online platforms for assessment of students promotes a system of student-teacher dynamism in relation to delivery and learning of specific lesson contents.

The online platforms could be perceived to mean integrated set of interactive online services that provides the teachers, students and other stakeholders in education with information, tools and resources to support and enhance educational delivery and management. It could also be a comprehensive system enabling secure web-based training and e-learning solution that employs a simple and intuitive user interface. The online platforms can be used mainly in educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities (Timeless Learning, 2019). An effective learning platform will enable students to submit assignments for marking and assessment, communicate by mail and participate in life discussions and forums with other students and teachers and store work and notes online for use in assignments and revision outside normal school hours. It also enables students create an online portfolio, including digital photos and videos of performance as well as text.

Online assessment has to do with the use of technology to manage and deliver assessment on students' academic performance within a given period and from any location. Some of the most widely used forms of online assessments are students response system, self and peer-assessment, e-submission and e-marking, e-test, e-quizzes and e-exams, among others. The use of online assessment could be enhanced through the use of the e-assessment lifecycle such as; planning, authoring, preparation towards delivery, delivering the assessment, managing the results and review and evaluation of the entire process (Digital Education Office, 2019). One of the significant essence for the use of online platforms for students' assessment is to provide a more convenient, objective and reliable medium for the gathering of relevant information about student educational and/or academic performance; determine the level of interest of a student about a particular academic endeavour and to pass objective judgement regarding their learning process (Lynch, 2016). These performances that are to be evaluated are anchored on the students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

Business education is a program of study geared towards the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed in the workplace and the educational spectrum. One vital need in the current dispensation of business education program is the ability of



the teachers and students to have adequate knowledge on the use of online platforms for online assessment and learning respectively. Obviously, the use of online platforms for educational assessment can set the basis for the advancement of information communication technology in the world of business and education. Business education is an aspect of general education that is predicated on equipping its target audience with distinctive skills, knowledge, aptitude and attitudes requisite for occupational competence in the areas of education and business. In business education, knowledge gaining and skill acquisition for the business and educational world constitutes an integral element (Ohaka & Bupo, 2019; Ohaka & Onuoha, 2017; Akpomi, 2008).

The utilization of online platforms for assessment gingers the morale of students to learn how to innovate and interact with learning contents. The use of online assessment in tertiary institutions could be very beneficial as it helps to reduce the cash and time that would have been spent printing and marking of exam booklets. Using online platforms for assessment has the capacity to improve the image of the institution where it is being adopted, enhance the nature of education generally and make adaptation to the use of information technology more potent (Garrison & Anderson cited in Eze, Chinedu-Eze & Bello, 2018). The use of online platforms for the assessment of students have the advantage of providing the teacher with randomized questions to discourage cheating, immediate release of exam result after the exam and the possibility to examine many students simultaneously. Utilization of online platforms for students' assessment in tertiary institutions is influenced by the students' level of computer literacy and information communication competencies and many Business Education students do not have the needed competence in computer operations that forms the basis for e-learning integration (Gabriel, Sushil & Zhang in Bupo & Ndinechi, 2015).

Despite the numerous merits of online platforms for educational assessment in the developing countries like Nigeria, its adoption and utilization has rather remained too slow sequel to the view that some students in our tertiary institutions do not have adequate knowledge and skills on how to use these possible online learning and assessment platforms. Even those who may possess these practical skills and knowledge are usually not encouraged or provided with the need to resort to using them for educational purposes. Bupo and Ndinechi (2015) also added that online assessment appears to be poorly judiciously utilized in tertiary institutions and that, many of the students do not have e-mail addresses, cannot operate a computer and



have little knowledge of possible online learning and assessment platforms. Also, many studies over the years have only focused on the accessibility of online learning platforms, their availability, challenges and prospects (Anene, Imam, Odumuh, 2014; Aboderin & Kumuyi, 2013) but not much have been done on the areas of the adoption, utilization and how it is being perceived by the key players in our tertiary institutions. The management of Rivers State University initially introduced online assessment of students in some courses, but this was stopped in 2016. It is in light of these that the researchers resolved to predicate this study on the perception of business education students on the utilization of online platforms for educational assessment.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do students perceive the ease of use of online platforms for assessment in business education in Rivers State University?
2. What are the perceived challenges usually encountered by students during online assessments in Rivers State University?
3. How do students perceive the adoption of online platforms for assessment in business education in Rivers State University?

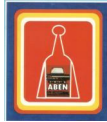
Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 levels of significance:

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of students in different levels of study on the ease of use of online platforms for assessment.

Method

The research design adopted for study was descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of 1,109 Business Education students in Rivers State University, out of which 844 students were selected as sample for the study using purposive sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire developed from literature, validated by experts in the field of business education. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a coefficient of 0.78. The instrument was administered to the respondents directly by the researchers and retrieved immediately. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the hypothesis was tested with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).



Results

Research Question 1

How do students perceive the ease of use of online platforms for assessment in business education in Rivers State University?

Table 1: Result showing how students perceive the ease of using online platforms for assessment in business education in Rivers State University?

S/N	Item Statements	(N)	X	S.D	Remarks
1.	Logging into the online platform for the test/exam	844	3.33	0.78	Very Easy
2.	Selecting the answers to the questions	844	3.47	1.20	Very Easy
3.	Scrolling through the questions on the test portal	844	3.41	0.67	Very Easy
4.	Making adjustments and corrections to already answered questions	844	3.30	0.76	Very Easy
5.	Submitting the test and logging out of the online platform	844	3.31	0.80	Very Easy
Total Mean/SD			16.82	4.20	
Grand Mean/SD			3.36	0.84	Very Easy

Source: Field Survey, (2019)

The results in Table 1, show how students perceive the ease of use of online platform for assessment. The mean response to items 1 to 5 indicates that the students perceived usage of online platforms for assessment to be very easy. This means that students found it very easy logging into the online platform, selecting the answers to the questions, scrolling through the questions, making adjustments to already answered questions, submitting the test and logging out of the online platform. The grand mean of 3.36 indicate the respondents perceive the use of online platforms for educational assessment to be very easy.

Research Question 2

What are the perceived challenges usually encountered by students during online assessments in Rivers State University?

Table 2: Result showing the challenges encountered by students during online assessments in Rivers State University

S/N	Item Statement	(N)	No. of Students	% 100
1.	The time for the test was inadequate	844	517	61.26
2.	Power supply was not regular	844	310	36.73
3.	The system did not work properly	844	288	34.12
4.	The site was slow	844	242	28.67
5.	I could not use the system	844	214	25.36
6.	Nobody to guide me when I was confused on how the system works	844	201	23.82
7.	I could not see the questions properly on the system	844	182	21.56
8.	System Errors in the marking of the test	844	164	19.43

The data in Table 2 show the number of students that face various challenges while undergoing an online test. The inadequacy of the time for the test had the highest percentage of 61.26%. The irregularity of power supply and functionality of the system had percentages below the average (36.73% and 34.12% respectively). System errors in marking the test had the lowest percentage (19.43%) as only 164 students, out of 844, experienced this challenge. The data is best shown in the figure below:

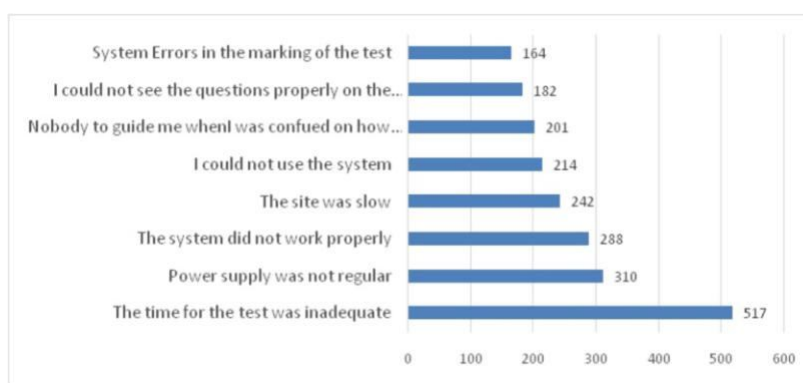


Figure 1: Chart showing the challenges faced by students while undergoing an online test

The chart shows graphically that the greatest challenge faced by students was that the time for the test was inadequate as 517 students out of 844 students pointed to that problem. The least faced problem, as opined by the respondents, was that of system errors in marking the test.

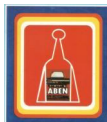
Research Question 3

How do students perceive the adoption of online platforms for assessment in business education?

Table 3: How do students perceive the adoption of online platforms for assessment in business education in Rivers State University?

S/N	Question	Yes	No	I do not know	Total
1.	Do you think that online assessment should be used for business education courses?	449 53.3%	315 37.3%	80 9.4%	844 100%
2.	Do you prefer online assessment to paper-pen assessment?	392 46%	377 45%	75 9%	844 100%

The data in Table 3 shows that 53% of the respondents agreed that online assessment should be used for business education courses while 37% disagreed. About 10% of



the respondents were indifferent to the adoption of online assessment. Also, 46% of the respondents prefer online assessment to paper-pen assessment while 45% prefer paper-pen assessment to online assessment. Nine percent of the respondents are indifferent.

Hypothesis

H₀₁ There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of students in different levels of study on the ease of use of online platforms for assessment.

Table 4: ANOVA result showing the difference in mean responses of students in levels of study on the ease of use of online platforms for assessment

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Remark
Corrected Model	2.041 ^a	4	.510	1.607	.170	.008	Accept null hypothesis
Intercept	263.864	1	263.864	831.312	.000	.498	
Level	2.041	4	.510	1.607	.170	.008	
Error	266.304	839	.317				
Total	9819.360	844					
Corrected Total	268.345	843					

a. R Squared = .008 (Adjusted R Squared = .003)

Source: Field Survey, (2019)

The data in Table 4 show that the F-cal is 1.607 and the p-value is 0.17. Since the p-value is greater than the level of significance (p-value > 0.05), the F-value is not significant. This means that the null hypothesis is accepted. That is, students in different level of study did not differ in how they perceive the ease of use of online platforms for assessment in Rivers state.

Discussion of Major Findings

The findings of the study as shown by research question one reveals that business education students in Rivers State University were of the view that using online platforms for educational assessment was very easy. The grand mean of 3.36 indicates that student could easily log in the online platforms, navigate through the platform, answer the questions and submit their answers. The results are in line with Lynch (2016) who had posited that using online platforms for learning promotes students' interest and facilitates objective assessment of students. The findings contradict the view of Gabriel, Sushil and Zhang (cited Bupo & Ndinechi, 2015) who discovered that students' information literacy level was low and that many students lacked the competence in computer usage. This present study shows that students have the capacity to adapt to online learning and assessment.



The findings of research question 2 show the challenges that students faced while partaking in an online assessment. The findings show that a large percent of the students was of the view that the time allotted for the online tests/exam was inadequate. This goes to show that course designers should consider the time for online tests and/or exam. The time should not be too short or too long but rather adequate to allow students attempt the questions. The strategy of time reduction in online test, as JAMB adopts, is to discourage exam malpractice. This is good but educators who want to adopt online platforms for assessments should be considerate of students' individual difference. The findings in research question 3 indicate that students are of the opinion that online platforms should be adopted for assessment in business education. Although 45 percent of the respondents prefer paper-pen assessment than the online assessment, a larger number of students still prefer online assessment. The percentage of students who still prefer paper-pen assessment may be because of the many challenges students encounter when undergoing online assessments.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that business education students are of view that online platforms be adopted for education assessments in Rivers State University.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.

1. The management of Rivers State University should reintroduce the assessment of business education students through online platforms which was stopped in 2016. This will help to further bring about objectivity in the assessment process, saving of cost and time accordingly.
2. The management of Rivers State University should ensure stable power supply in the institution and the maintenance of Information Technology Center (ITC) materials to mitigate problems students encounter during online assessment in the center.
3. Business educators should seek for more training in the use of online platforms for assessment. This will incredibly help the business educators to enhance their ICT skills and avert some of the challenges encountered in terms of applicability.

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