



BUSINESS EDUCATORS PERCEPTION OF THE USE OF E-LEARNING APPLICATIONS FOR MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study determined business educators' opinion on the use of e-learning for mitigating the impact of Covid-19 on tertiary business education programme in Anambra State. One research question guided the study and two hypotheses were tested. The population of the study comprised 109 business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The instrument was a 15 items structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument was validated by three experts in the Department of Business Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus. The instrument was subject to a pilot test on 10 business educators in Enugu State. The application of the Cronbach Alpha reliability test on the returned data yielded coefficient value of 0.79 for internal consistency. The mean value was used to answer the research questions while the standard deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents' ratings. For the hypotheses, t-test was used to test all the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that business educators in tertiary institution in Anambra State opine that e-learning will mitigate the impact of covid-19 on the business education to a high extent. The respondents further opined that e-learning promotes flexibility in teaching and learning of business education courses, ensures that learning objectives are achieved regardless of actual online contact time spent in teaching- learning, focuses on achievement of students needs, creates room for independent learning, promotes ease of monitoring and documentation of teaching activities and gives lecturers the ability to adapt to the wide learning styles to a high extent. The gender and years of working experience of the respondents did not significantly affect their opinion. It was recommended based on the findings of the study that Government should be more committed in providing Information and Communication Technology application and tools for business education programme in tertiary institutions. The researchers also recommended that administrators of business education programme in tertiary institutions should partner with Private IT firms should be welcomed to provide ICT Support services for e-learning and e-education platforms for the business education programme.

Keywords: E-learning, Covid-19, Business Education Programme, business educators

Introduction

The outbreak of Covid-19 popularly known as the Corona Virus has distorted the smooth operation of all facets of the economic and social lives of countries all over the world. Just as in other sectors of the economy of nations around the world, the educational sector was not spared from the "unannounced intrusion" of Covid-19. According to Shivangi (2020), the education sector has also been shaken by this tragedy, resonated globally across the education sector. Michael (2020) averred that appears despite the fact that younger population (youths in tertiary, teens in secondary and primary schools) were at lower risk of mortality compared to older adults, pandemic precautions called "social distancing" or "physical distancing" have tried to reduce interpersonal contact and thus minimize the type of community transmission that could rapidly develop in dense social networks such as the university.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (2020) stated that social distancing



is a measure taken to reduce physical contact with other individuals. It helps to reduce physical interaction between people in a large gathering in order to stall the spread of the virus. Michael (2020) postulated that educational systems around the world has been to respond to the pandemic with protocols for "emergency eLearning," marking the accelerated transition from face-to-face classrooms to online learning. Raheem and Khan (2020) stated that many countries' leaders have declared lockdowns and told residents to remain at home because of the threat this epidemic presents to human life. The Nigerian government followed suit by shutting down schools on the 19th of March, 2020. The closure also affected tertiary institutions in Nigeria in general and Anambra State in Particular. This move by the Federal Government of Nigeria through its Ministry of Education led to the abortion of all the academic programmes in tertiary institutions. One of the academic programmes affected by the lockdown is the business education programme.

The business education programme is an educational programme in tertiary institutions that equips its recipients with the knowledge and skills for establishing and managing a business venture. Onokpaunu (2016) defined business education as an aspect of general education that prepares students' for employment and advancement in entrepreneurial venturing, teaching profession and other office occupations. Similarly, Utoware and Kren-kidi (2013), business education is a programme of instruction which consist office education and general business education. Office education has to do with preparation of the business education recipients for office careers through initial, refresher and upgrading education leading to employability and advancement in office occupation while the general business education programme provides students with information and competencies which are needed by all in managing personal and business affairs and in using the services of the business world. Sadly, since the closure of schools and grounding of the educational activities business education students have gone home and have been denied any form of academic exercise. Scholars have decried the negative impact this situation would cause in the development of the human capital of the nation. According to Aina and Abdurrahman (2020) opined that the closure of school would adversely impact on students' academic performance. This informed the suggestion by stakeholders in education on the application of e-learning application for teaching students during the period of the pandemic and beyond.

E-learning is not a new terminology in the national educational space in Nigeria. However, the break out of the Covid-19 pandemic has greatly shown that the knowledge and methodology in the use of e-learning is limited. This explains the failure of most business education programmes in federal and state universities in Nigeria to adapt e-learning in educating business education students from home. It appears that over the years, a lot of "lip service" was paid to the integration of e-learning in the business education programme with little or no implementation done. This view is supported by Rajhans, Memon, Patil and Goyal (2020) who posited that despite the vital roles e-learning plays in tertiary education in many countries of the world, most developing nations including Nigeria are yet to unlock its full potentials. It thus becomes imperative that a clearer definition of e-learning is postulated given the present situation that faces the business education programme in particular and education in general.

Over the years, different terminologies have been used as synonyms to e-learning like CBT (Computer-Based Training), WBT (Web-Based Training), online learning and IBT (Internet-Based Training). E-learning is a method of teaching that adapts technology in teaching and enables teachers and students to interact online rather than face to face. According to Adeoye, Adanikin and Adanikin (2020), the term e-learning connotes electronic method of learning which is associated with computerized learning in an interactive interface at the convenience of both the learners and lecturers. Raheem and Khan (2020) defined e-learning as a technological tool for teaching and learning. Khan (2020) further stated that the applications of e-learning include, computer based learning, web-based learning, virtual education opportunities and digital collaboration. Content is provided via internet, audio or video tape, CDROM, and satellite TV. E-learning can be self-paced or instructor-led that include image, media in the form of text, animation, and streaming video and audio. Adeoye, Adanikin and Adanikin (2020) that some e-learning platforms could be utilized in teaching business education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Some of these platforms include, Zoom, Microsoft teams, google hangout (meet), skype, Bamboo learning, google classroom, Docebo, WIZIQ, Adobe captivate, Elucidat, Blackboard learn amongst others. The distant learning tools for e-learning have also been suggested as ways of facilitating teaching and learning during the pandemic. Rajhans, Memon, Patil and Goyal (2020) highlighted some of the e-learning tools for distant learning to include are TV, CD-ROM and Radio as well as the use of mobile phone applications like whatsapp and telegram to facilitate learning.



E-learning according to literature has a great potential in facilitating teaching and learning because it helps in bringing the teacher and the student. The vast arrays of technologies available for e-learning appear to make it very important in facilitate teaching and learning in tertiary education programmes like the business education programme. Raheem and Khan (2020) averred that e-learning is the best and most convenient way to for students to learn independently. According to Abasi, Ayoob, Malik and Memon (2020), tertiary institutions globally are clamouring and promoting e-learning as a teaching method and it is being widely appreciated by the learners. This is because e-learning tools have the advantage of its ease of use, flexibility and better control over the environment. However, in spite of its multiple advantages there are quite a few limitations of e-learning such as social isolation, lack of student-teacher interaction and connectivity issue.

The use of e-learning in tertiary institutions in Anambra State in particular and Nigeria in general according to some scholars will be hampered because of issues relating to erratic power supply. Adeoye, Adanikin and Adanikin (2020) noted that most tertiary institutions in Nigeria are sighted in rural areas that have little or no access to power supply this will greatly limit the functionality of the e-learning platforms if integrated. In another vein, the high cost of data was seen as a challenge that could greatly affect the successful use of e-learning in tertiary business education programme. Furthermore, personality variable relating to gender of the business educator and their years of experience could affect their ability to utilize e-learning platforms for learning. It's been suggested that male educator are more adaptable to the use of technology in teaching. Similarly, years of experience of the business educators could also influence business educators' acceptability of the use of e-learning in teaching. However, these views are hypothetical and have not been empirically proven to be the case among business educators in Anambra State. It is against this backdrop that this study is conducted to determine business educators' opinion on the use of e-learning for mitigating the impact of Covid-19 on tertiary business education programme in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

The closure of schools in Nigeria resulting from the outbreak of Covid-19 has greatly affected the academic programmes nationally and locally. The business education programme has not been spared from the menace of the pandemic. The closure of tertiary institutions forced students of the business programme to go back home to their parents with little or no academic tasks given to them to engage them while they are at home. With no remedy in sight months after the closure of schools amidst renewed call for resumption of academic activities in the business education programme as well as in other academic programmes in tertiary institutions in the state.

This repulsive scenario raised a great concern on the parents, government of all levels and the students themselves. The precarious situation had a lot of untold consequences on the society as most students rather than being in school were now idle and near frustrated, as the saying goes an idle mind is the devil workshop, most students took to thuggery, cultism, arm robbery and other anti social activities. It is worsened by the incidences of rape reported daily in a magnitude unseen pre-covid 19. The researchers are worried that if innovative methods for teaching business education students are not sought, the level of redundancy in the students will increase. It will erode the knowledge, attitude and skills acquired by the students' pre-covid 19. This will mean resetting (going back to square one) the academic calendar to make up for time lost.

Research Question

To what extent will the use of e-learning applications mitigate the impact of covid-19 on the business education programme in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in mean ratings of male and female business educators on the extent the use of e-learning applications will mitigate the impact of covid-19 on the business education programme in Anambra State.

2 There is no significant difference in mean ratings of experienced and less experienced business educators on the extent the use of e-learning applications will mitigate the impact of covid-19 on the business education programme in Anambra State.



Method

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 109 business educators in tertiary institutions (Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (16), ChukwuemekaOdumegwuOjukwu University, Igbaria Campus (5), Federal College of Education (Technical), Umunze (71), NwaforOrizu College of Education, Nsugbe (10) and Madonna University, Okija (7) in the State. The instrument was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument was titled "Questionnaire on Business Educators Perception of the Use of E-Learning in Mitigating the Impact of Covid-19 (QBEPUELMIC)". The instrument was structured on a 4- point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). The instrument was validated by three experts in the Department of Business Education, Chukwuemeka OdumegwuOjukwu University, Igbariam Campus. Further the instrument was subject to a pilot test on 10 business educators in Enugu State. The application of the Cronbach Alpha reliability test on the returned data yielded coefficient value of 0.79 for internal consistency. The researcher administered the questionnaire by sending copies of the questionnaires to the e-mails and Whatsapp messages of the business educators. In cases where it was difficult administering the instrument electronically. An appointment was made and the instrument was administered on the spot and retrieved. Out of the 109 copies of questionnaire administered, 84 copies were returned in good condition and were used for the collection of data for the study. The mean value was used to answer the research questions while the standard deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents' ratings. In analyzing the mean value, the decision rule will be based on the real limit of numbers as shown below:

Response option	Values	Real Limit
Very High Extent	4	3.50-4.00
High Extent	3	2.50-3.49
Low Extent	2	1.50-2.49
Very Low Extent	1	1.00-1.49

For the hypotheses, t-test was used to test all the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Where the calculated t value is less than the critical value of t, it means that the variable does not significantly affect respondents' mean ratings and the hypothesis was accepted. Conversely, where the calculated t value is equal to or greater than the critical t value, it means that the variable has a significant effect on the respondents' mean ratings and the hypothesis was rejected.

Result

Research Question

To what extent will the use of e-learning applications mitigate the impact of covid-19 on the business education programme in Anambra State?

Table 1: Respondents Mean Ratings on the Extent the Use of E-learning applications will mitigate the Impact of Covid-19 on the Business Education programme

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1.	E-learning promotes flexibility in teaching and learning of business education courses	3.12	0.76	High Extent
2.	E-learning is student-centered, thus focuses on achievement of students needs.	3.20	0.79	High Extent
3.	E-learning facilitates active engagement of students	3.25	0.75	High Extent
4.	E-learning ensures that Learning objectives are achieved regardless of actual online contact time spent in teaching- learning	2.87	0.69	High Extent
5.	E-learning allows students to ask their doubts using social or personal messaging apps that	3.01	0.70	High Extent



	get addressed without disclosing their identity during the online class.			
6.	E-Learning facilitates lecturers use of features such as random questioning, use of chat box, opinion polls to keep the learner engaged during live streamed online session	2.64	0.68	High Extent
7.	E-learning facilitates lecturers application of demonstration skill using videos like youtube, instagram among others	2.78	0.73	High Extent
8.	E-learning enables the shift from monotonous didactic lectures to interactive online lectures using video conferencing tools like Google meet, Microsoft Teams and Zoom	3.12	0.76	High Extent
9.	E-learning facilitates ease of learning without the pressure of the classroom	3.33	0.84	High Extent
10.	E-learning promotes more hands-on learning experiences using e-platforms like create and learn	3.40	0.81	High Extent
11.	Through the use of e-learning platforms, students can study independently	3.11	0.76	High Extent
12.	E-learning allows students to work at their own pace	2.82	0.70	High Extent
13.	E-learning saves students the cost of travelling	3.19	0.77	High Extent
14.	E-learning promotes ease of monitoring and documentation of teaching activities	2.95	0.75	High Extent
15.	E-learning gives lecturers the ability to adapt to the wide learning styles	2.64	0.71	High Extent
Cluster Mean		3.02		High Extent

Data in Table 1 reveal that the respondents rated all the items (1-15) with mean ratings ranging from 2.64 to 3.40 and standard deviations ranging between 0.68 to 0.84 on the extent the use of e-learning applications will mitigate the impact of covid-19 on the business education programme in Anambra State to a high extent. The cluster mean of 3.02 indicate that business educators opine that e-learning will mitigate the impact of covid-19 in business education to a high extent.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in mean ratings of male and female business educators on the extent the use of e-learning applications will mitigate the impact of covid-19 on the business education programme in Anambra State.

Table 2: Summary of t-test Analysis of Male and Female Business Educators on the Extent the use of E-learning Applications will Mitigate the Impact of Covid-19 on the Business Education Programme

Status	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	cal. t	t-crit.	Decision
Male Bus. Edu.	39	3.24	0.78	82	0.29	1.96	NS
Female Bus. Ed.	45	3.02	0.71				
Total	84						

Result in Table 2 show that male business educators (39 in number) had a mean rating of 3.24 and standard deviation of 0.78, while the female business educators (45 in number) had a mean rating of 3.02 and standard deviation of 0.71. These yielded a calculated t-value of 0.29 at 82 degrees of freedom. Since the calculated t-value of 0.29 is less than the critical t-value of



1.96, the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in mean ratings of male and female business educators on the extent the use of e-learning applications will mitigate the impact of covid-19 on the business education programme in Anambra State.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in mean ratings of experienced and less experienced business educators on the extent the use of e-learning applications will mitigate the impact of covid-19 on the business education programme in Anambra State.

Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis of Male and Female Business Educators on the Extent the use of E-learning Applications will Mitigate the Impact of Covid-19 on the Business Education Programme

Status	N	X	SD	df	cal. t	t-crit.	Decision
Experienced Bus. Edu.	53	3.01	0.72	82	0.53	1.96	NS
Less Experienced Bus. Ed.	31	3.32	0.76				
Total	84						

Result in Table 3 show that experienced business educators (53 in number) had a mean rating of 3.01 and standard deviation of 0.72, while the less experienced business educators (31 in number) had a mean rating of 3.32 and standard deviation of 0.76. These yielded a calculated t-value of 0.53 at 82 degrees of freedom. Since the calculated t-value of 0.53 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in mean ratings of experienced and less experienced business educators on the extent the use of e-learning applications will mitigate the impact of covid-19 on the business education programme in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

Finding on the research question revealed that business educators in tertiary institution in Anambra State opine that e-learning will mitigate the impact of covid-19 on the business education to a high extent. Business educators opine that e-learning promotes flexibility in teaching and learning of business education courses, ensures that Learning objectives are achieved regardless of actual online contact time spent in teaching- learning, focuses on achievement of student’s needs, creates room for independent learning, promotes ease of monitoring and documentation of teaching activities and gives lecturers the ability to adapt to the wide learning styles among others. This is in agreement with Rajhans, Memon, Patil and Goyal (2020) who stated that the COVID-19 pandemic is proving to be a constructive disruptor, giving an opportunity for restructuring the present conventional classroom based educational system. Rajhans et al (2020) further stated that the rapid transition to online education has not only benefited students but also has created a momentum of continued education for students. In the same vein, Pingle (2011) found that students have benefitted from the use of e-learning because of the comfort it provides working with computers and other e-learning packages than the traditional face-to-face classroom. According to Adeoye, Adanikin and Adanikin (2020), the e-learning system will completely reduce the issues of insufficient classrooms for lectures as student can easily take the lectures online without any disruption at their convenience. In the same vein, Rajhans, et al (2020) stated that some of the facilitating factors of e-learning mentioned by respondents include the time flexibility, the comfort of work from home, and the ability to discharge their duties even in crisis situations adding to their satisfaction level. Rajhans et al (2020) further reported numerous advantages of e-learning environment like the ease of conduct, convenient technique even with limited resources at hand, cost-effective, ability to adapt to the wide learning styles and choices of iGeneration learners, the possibility of innovation and ease of monitoring and documentation of teaching activities. These factors according to Rajhans, et al (2020) kept the motivation of teachers high in adapting to e-education mode.



Further findings revealed that male and female business educators irrespective of their levels of experiences did not significantly differ in their mean rating of the extent the use of e-learning will mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the business education programme in Anambra State. This means that the respondents irrespective of gender and years of experience were in agreement that the use of e-learning will mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on business education. This is in agreement with Rajhans, et al (2020) who reported that e-learning applications in education has been useful in surviving the threat of Covid-19 on education and online teaching, use of internet technology in education are set to become a new normal.

Conclusion

Based on the finding of the study, the researchers conclude that e-learning application can provide solution to the problems caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Through the use of e-learning applications the disruption of the academic calendar of business education programmes in tertiary institutions resulting from Covid-19 outbreak can be averted. This is because e-learning supports distance learning and provides channels of communication and interaction between students and teachers. It is therefore imperative that measures are put in place that will promote the use of e-learning in business education programme.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that;

1. Government should be more committed in providing Information and Communication Technology application and tools for business education programme in tertiary institutions. This commitment should go beyond drafting and signing of documents but providing the facilities and services needed to enable e-learning.

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