



BUSINESS EDUCATORS' UTILIZATION OF ASYNCHRONOUS AND SYNCHRONOUS TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES AS THE NEW NORMAL FOR INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study assessed Business educators' utilization of asynchronous and synchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for Instructional delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Descriptive survey research was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of 137 Business educators from four tertiary institutions in Rivers State namely: Rivers State University, University of Port-Harcourt, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, and Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku. Convenient sampling technique used to select only those available to respond to the research instrument. Therefore, only the 67 Business educators who were available and willing to answer the research instrument made up the sample of the study. The researchers' developed structured questionnaire which was validated by two experts, one of Measurement and Evaluation, and one of Business Education all from Rivers State University, Port-Harcourt was used for the study. Cronbach alpha reliability computed yielded reliability indexes of 0.85, 0.72, and 0.81 for the three clusters and an average index of 0.79. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed Business educators to a moderate extent utilize asynchronous teaching and learning approaches and to a low extent utilize synchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The findings showed that the challenges affecting Business educators' utilization of asynchronous and synchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery are inadequate facilities supporting technologies usage, poor electricity supply; poor digital skills for preparing digital contents and lack of motivation and incentives for those using these approaches. Based on the findings, it was recommended among that, Business education administrators should train and retrain Business educators on the use of synchronous approaches to teaching and learning.

Keywords: *asynchronous, synchronous, electronic learning and Business education*

Introduction

The sporadic transmission of Corona Virus popularly referred to as COVID-19 across the globe and its subsequent emergence in Nigeria with the first case of an infected Italian on



February 27, 2020, led to the lockdown of every sector of the nation's economy, education inclusive. This response was meant to avert the continuous transmission of the deadly disease and safeguard the life of citizens. Consequently, Nigerians witnessed the closure of all schools from kindergarten to tertiary institutions irrespective of whether they are publicly and privately owned in many States (Anifowoshe, Aborode, Ayodele, Iretiayo & David, 2020).

It is important to recall that the closure of schools and institutions of higher learning resulted to stoppage of all educational programmes for almost a year (Business Education inclusive). This affected all schools' calendars and has resulted to crashed semesters with adverse consequences on the depth of content coverage especially in Business Education where both theory and practical teachings are required. This situation is absolutely unfortunate considering the fact that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2020), recommended in its guidance note on education systems, the use of distance learning facilities such as online or electronic instructions (asynchronous and synchronous) in order to minimize disruption of educational programmes and promote continuous learning.

Asynchronous approaches to teaching and learning allow learners to work at their own convenient time by downloading learning materials and studying them later. Khe, Chengyuan, Donn and Shurui (2020) noted that this approach was used by many educators during the COVID-19 crises including uploading PowerPoint slides or papers onto a learning management system such as Moodle and asking students to read them on their own. Students were encouraged to ask questions asynchronously on the Moodle forum. Ordu and Abdulkarim (2020) noted that asynchronous technologies are readily available and accessible to Business educators in Nigeria. With regards synchronous approaches to learning, Bastable, Gramet, Jacobs, and Sopczyk (2010) opined that these allow students to learn through online platforms that empower both teachers and learners to interact on real-time basis. Zahir (2020) also opined that using synchronous approach educators can connect with students virtually irrespective of their distance at an agreed time. Zahir also reported that schools adopted this approach to ensure continuation of learning and compliance to physical distancing. In same vein, Neendoor (2020) noted that using synchronous approach there is a specific time both educators and learners must hookup to the interactive section at their convenient places. Neendoor also noted that this approach to teaching and learning eliminates the barrier of distance, space and place of learning. Consequently, the use of any of these two recommended approaches is meant to promote physical or social distancing amongst students and helps to stop the spread of the viral diseases in the case of infected person.

It is important to note that when the need to reopen institutions for learning arose, the Federal Ministry of Education did not ignore the need for the safety of citizens' lives as it rolled out a 'safe school and quality learning strategy' (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2020). The strategy recommended and encouraged the use of safe distancing procedures and creative delivery approaches in all educational institutions in line with the UNESCO recommendation. The aim is to ensure the safety of citizens seeking for knowledge within the educational sector in Nigeria. This recommendation is meant to encourage a new standard for instructional delivery in each educational institution, hence the new normal. This is based on the fact that the 'new normal' defines a position taken to be the ideal by organization, society, nation or any other group of people after exposure to certain unanticipated crisis such as war, pandemic and natural disasters (Porter, 2019). This state differs from the prevailed situation of things prior to the crisis.

Business Educators adherence to this new normal simply means upholding the recommendations for 'safe school and quality learning strategy' and contextualizing them to their institutions of primary assignment. Thus, this connotes utilizing asynchronous and synchronous technological approaches to deliver instructions in Business Education programme. Asynchronous and synchronous technological approaches can either be online or offline



electronic means capable of promoting physical/social distancing as well as learning in addition to non-academic activities such as regular washing of hands, neatness, healthy style of living, good sanitation system that have become the new normal (Chibuikwe & Bashar, 2020). Buheji and Ahmed (2020) opined that using asynchronous and synchronous technological approaches in the new normal to deliver instruction is synonymous to using electronic learning (e-learning) facilities as approach to teaching and learning. Ordu and Abdulkarim (2020) opined that using e-learning facilities as the new normal simply means adjusting to either web-based learning, online instruction, and multimedia instruction (such as CD, DVD, and YouTube videos to provide instructions) in order to eliminate the barrier of time, place and minimize close physical contact of persons during teaching and learning Business Education courses.

The issues surrounding the use of e-learning facilities are not new in Business Education. Many researches for been conducted and recommendations made. Therefore, it is expected that prior to the reality created by the advent of COVID-19 which lead to the establishment of a new normal within the educational system, Business Educators should have been prepared and engaged with asynchronous and synchronous technological approaches in instructional delivery. Nevertheless, extant literature related to instruction during the pandemic reported mixed results. Ordu and Abdulkarim (2020) reported low extent of e-learning technologies integration by Business Educators during the lockdown. Adelakun (2020) reported interruptions in students' final phase of their studies due to lockdown of educational institutions. Edeh, Nwafor, Obafemi, Shuvro, Fyeface, Aabha and Alhuseen (2020) reported that many educators and students relied on technology to ensure continued learning during the Coronavirus pandemic and online education was hindered by poor infrastructures including, network, power, inaccessibility and unavailability issues and poor digital skills. Ebohon, Obienu, Irabor, Amadin, & Omoregie (2021) reported difficult with paradigm shift from traditional approaches to instruction as teachers and students across universities had difficulty with internet connection. Consequently, the researchers are not sure whether Business Educators were able to use asynchronous and synchronous technological approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery in Business education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, despite the challenges of poor infrastructures such as internet network, epileptic power supply, poor integration of e-learning facilities, and inadequate digital skills which can hinder the use of these new normal approaches. It is in view of the foresaid background that present study was conceived.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- i. To what extent do Business educators utilize asynchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery?
- ii. To what extent do Business educators utilize synchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery?
- iii. What are the challenges affecting Business Educators utilization of asynchronous and synchronous teaching and learning approaches in the new normal for instructional delivery?

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The survey research design was adopted because it attempted to elicit the opinions of respondents. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) posited that when individual's views or perceptions are to be collected on subject matter, survey research design is the most appropriate to be used.



The population for this study is made up of 137 Business educators from four tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The tertiary institutions are Rivers State University - 19, University of Port-Harcourt - 32, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education – 54 and Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku – 32. Convenient sampling technique was used to select only those available to answer the research instrument. Consequently, only 67 Business educators who were available and willing to answer the research instrument made up the sample of the study.

The researchers developed instrument titled “Business Educators’ Utilization of Asynchronous and Synchronous Teaching and Learning Approaches as the New Normal for Instructional Delivery in Tertiary Institutions (APARPSSM)”. The instrument contains 15 items. The instrument is structured based on 4 points rating scale of: Very High Extent (VHE – 4marks), High Extent (HE – 3marks), Moderate Extent (ME – 2marks) and Low Extent (LE – 1mark) were used to answer research question 1 & 2, while Strongly Agree (SA - 4), Agree (A - 3), Disagreed (D - 2), and Strongly Disagree (SD - 1). The instrument was subjected to validation by two experts, one expert of Measurement and Evaluation, and one expert of Business Education all from Rivers State University, Port-Harcourt. The experts’ comments and input were used for the modification of the final copy of the instrument, to ensure that it measures the intended attributes. Cronbach alpha reliability statistics was used to test for the reliability. The computation due with the responses of 15 Business Educators from Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, gave reliability indexes of 0.85, 0.72, and 0.81 for the three clusters and an average index of 0.79. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. For decision making 3.50 points and above is regarded as VHE or SA, 2.50 to 3.49 as HE or A, 1.5 to 2.49 as ME or D, and below 1.5 as LE or SD.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do Business educators utilize asynchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery?

Table 1: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the Extent to which Business Educators utilize asynchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Uses CD/DVD to records lectures for students to play and learn at their own places and pace.	67	1.64	0.52	ME
2	Refers students to YouTube for video download to argument physical lecture	67	1.97	0.62	ME
3	Uploads PowerPoint slides for students to download and learn at their own places and pace	67	1.30	0.85	LE
4	Uses campus radio to teach students	67	1.17	0.72	LE
5	Refers students to scholars sites to download reading materials	67	1.53	0.52	ME
6	Uploads lecture materials on the institution’s website for students download and personal studies	67	1.64	0.62	ME
	Cluster mean	67	1.54	0.68	ME

Source: Field Survey, 2021



Table 1 shows that the Business educators for tertiary institutions in Rivers State are of the opinion that to a moderate extent they use CD/DVD to records lectures for students to play and learn at their own places and pace, refer students to YouTube for video download to argument physical lecture, refer students to scholars sites to download reading materials, and upload lecture materials on the institution's website for students download and personal studies with mean scores of 1.64, 1.97, 1.53, 1.64 and standard deviation of 0.52, 0.62, 0.52, and 0.62 respectively. The respondents also opined that to a low extent they upload PowerPoint slides for students to download and learn at their own places and pace and use campus radio to teach students with mean scores of 1.30, 1.17 and standard deviation of 0.85 and 0.72 respectively. However, when the cluster mean is considered, it can be concluded that Business educators opined that to a moderate extent they use utilize asynchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: To what extent do Business educators utilize synchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery?

Table 2: Summary of Mean Scores and Standard Deviation on the Extent to which Business Educators Utilize Synchronous Teaching and Learning Approaches as New Normal for Instructional Delivery.

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Uses web-based teaching and learning platforms for course delivery	67	1.08	0.71	LE
2	Uses online interaction platforms for course delivery	67	1.19	0.81	LE
3	Uses virtual learning platforms for course delivery	67	1.48	0.67	LE
	Cluster Mean	67	1.25	0.73	LE

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 2 shows that the respondents opined that to a low extent the use web-based teaching and learning platforms, use online interactive platforms and use virtual learning platforms for course delivery as new normal for instructional delivery with mean scores of 1.08, 1.19, 1.48, and standard deviation of 0.71, 0.81, and 0.67 respectively. In same vein, when the cluster mean for all the items is considered, it can be concluded that the respondents are of the opinion that to a low extent they utilize synchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges affecting Business Educators utilization of asynchronous and synchronous teaching and learning approaches in the new normal for instructional delivery?



Table 3: Summary of Mean Scores and Standard Deviation on the Challenges Affecting Business Educators Utilization of Asynchronous and Synchronous Teaching and Learning Approaches as the New Normal for Instructional Delivery

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Inadequate infrastructure facilities supporting technologies usage.	67	3.54	0.60	SA
2	Poor electric supply	67	2.54	0.63	A
3	Poor digital skills for preparing digital content	67	2.63	0.64	A
4	Poor internet network	67	1.35	0.40	SD
5	Lack of policy supporting the use of asynchronous and synchronous approaches	67	2.35	0.53	D
6	Lack of motivation and incentives for those using these approaches	67	2.56	0.63	A

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 3 shows that the respondents strongly agreed that inadequate infrastructure facilities supporting technologies usage is a challenge affecting their utilization of asynchronous and synchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery with mean of 3.54 and standard deviation of 0.60. The respondents also agreed that poor electricity supply; poor digital skills for preparing digital contents and lack of motivation and incentives for those using these approaches constitute challenges affecting their utilization with mean scores of 2.54, 2.63, 2.56 and standard deviation of 0.63, 0.53 and 0.63 respectively. The respondents also disagreed that lack of policy supporting the use of asynchronous and synchronous approaches is a challenge with mean score of 2.35 and standard deviation of 0.53. The respondents also strongly disagreed that poor internet network is a challenge affecting the use of asynchronous and synchronous approaches to teaching and learning as new normal for instructional delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The results relating to this specific purpose shows that Business educators opined that to a moderate extent they are utilizing asynchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. This finding is based on the fact that Business educators opined that to a moderate extent they use CD/DVD to records lectures for students to play and learn at their own places and pace, refer students to YouTube for video download to argument physical lecture, refer students to scholars sites to download reading materials, and upload lecture materials on the institution's website for students download. The findings are supported by the findings of Khe, Chengyuan, Donn and Shurui (2020) who reported that this approach was used by many educators during the COVID-19 crises. The findings are also supported by the discovery of Edeh, Nwafor, Obafemi, Shuvro, Fyeface, Aabha and Alhuseen (2020) when they reported that many educators and students relied on technology to ensure continued learning during the Coronavirus pandemic.

The results related to this specific purpose shows that to a low extent Business Educators utilize synchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. This finding emanated from the fact that Business educators opined that to a low extent they are using web-based teaching and learning platforms, use online interactive platforms and use virtual learning platforms for course delivery as new normal for instructional delivery. The findings are supported by the findings of Zahir (2020) who reported that schools adopted this approach to ensure continuation of



learning and compliance to physical distancing. The findings is also supported by the findings of Ordu and Abdulkarim (2020) when they found out that to low extent of e-learning technologies were integrated by Business Educators during the lockdown.

The results related to this specific purpose shows that the challenges affecting Business educators utilization of asynchronous and synchronous teaching and learning approaches as the new normal for instructional delivery are inadequate infrastructure facilities supporting technologies usage, poor electricity supply; poor digital skills for preparing digital contents and lack of motivation and incentives for those using these approaches. The findings are also supported by the discovery of Edeh, Nwafor, Obafemi, Shuvro, Fyeface, Aabha and Alhuseen (2020) when they reported that online education was hindered by poor infrastructures including, network, power, inaccessibility and unavailability issues and poor digital skills. The findings are also contrary to the findings of Ebohon, Obienu, Irabor, Amadin, & Omoregie (2021) when they reported that teachers and students across universities had difficulty with internet connection.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that Business educators to a moderate extent utilize asynchronous approach in teaching and learning as new normal for instructional delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. It can also be concluded that Business educators to a low extent utilize synchronous approach in teaching and learning as new normal for instructional delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. It can also be concluded that the challenges affecting Business educators utilizing asynchronous and synchronous approaches to a very high extent in teaching and learning Business education courses as new normal for instructional delivery are: inadequate infrastructure facilities supporting technologies usage, poor electricity supply; poor digital skills for preparing digital contents and lack of motivation and incentives for those using these approaches. Consequently, it can be concluded that physical and social distancing which are meant to be ensure through adopting these approaches are not adhered to in Business education programme in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were put forward for implementation:

- i. Business educators should be encouraged by their administrators to utilize asynchronous approach to teaching and learning to a very high extent as the new normal for instructional delivery as well as ensuring physical/social distancing.
- ii. Business education administrators should train and retrain Business educators on the use of synchronous approaches to teaching and learning as the new normal for instructional delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
- iii. Tertiary institutions' administrators in Rivers State should canvass and ensure the provision of basic infrastructural facilities, improved electricity supply, academic staff training in digital skills for developing digital content and motivate Business educators willing to use approaches promoting physical/social distance as the new normal for instructional delivery.

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