

VIRTUAL LEARNING AS A TOOL FOR BUSINESS EDUCATION AMIDST COVID-19 IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

With emergency of COVID 19 Pandemic in the world, virtual learning has become valuable way of teaching, learning and research in education. This study examined the virtual learning as a tool for Business Education programme amidst COVID 19 in Nigeria. It vividly considered the concept of Business Education; Virtual Learning and Business Education; Benefits of virtual learning in Business Education programme; challenges facing virtual learning in realizing the goals of business education amidst COVID 19 and virtual learning tools used in delivery of business education lesson. The paper concluded that virtual learning would have been the best alternative teaching method for business education amidst COVID 19 provided majority of Nigerian learners have access to internet facilities. It was also recommended among others, that Government should make provision for internet facilities at all level of education especially in business education; teachers and students should also be provided with necessary training regarding virtual learning for active teaching of business education programme.

Keywords: *Virtual Learning; Business Education; COVID 19*

Introduction

In a recent time COVID 19 has led to lockdown of every sectors especially education sector. This led to the closure of schools programme for almost six months. Therein some countries

of the world deemed it fit to adopt virtual teaching method so that the students could not backward in their academic activities. According to Bansal (2020), the pandemic has unmasked substantial inequalities in education sector. While some private schools in urban areas are engaged their students through online teaching, a large

number of students who are less privileged or in rural areas were left out. Most schools could not afford online facilities to partake in online teaching successfully as it is applicable to developed countries.

Observation shown that covid 19 pandemic has largely affected education, and this prompt policy makers to search for rapid and feasible solution to difficulties in learning amidst covid 19. Business education as one of the aspect of education could be seen as a process of instruct students practical skills, attitudes and knowledge needed in business environments, occupational place and societies so that in some cases students will be self-employed at the end of their programme. Adegoke (2018) posited that Business education is an aspect of vocational education that assist the learners to acquire practical knowledge to be fit in a place of work and be self-employed so as to enhance economic development of the nation. These aspects of education need to be given necessary consideration by searching for alternative way to conventional teaching amidst COVID 19 so as to keep the programme alive. It seems that virtual learning could be used as alternative way to teach students during the lockdown in order protect the economic future of the country.

Virtual learning is the process of using online classroom environment to disseminate information, knowledge, skills and right attitude to the students. Saliu (2020) observed that online teaching and learning process involve some digital

technologies that permit learners and teachers to interact effectively without face to face interaction. It appears that period of covid 19 pandemic is a typical example of times when conventional teaching paradigm could not work for teaching activities. During this period, as social distancing measure put in place, students and teachers are not allowed to interact physically, thus teaching and learning are disrupted (UNESCO, 2020). Teaching and learning in business education required interaction between students and teachers which may not only be physical (Akhtar, Hussan, Afzal & Gilani, 2019). Research shows that online learning has played a vital role in past as it has helped some institutions to overcome barrier of educational continuity in time of global crisis. Based on this bedrock, the present research examined the virtual learning as a tool for business education programme amidst COVID 19 in Nigeria.

Concept of business education

Business education appeared to be a process of instructing learners the practical skills and knowledge needed in a place of work, occupational field, business environment and self-employed business. Anao (1986) in Ojeaga and Igbinedion (2012) posited that business education is an educational process or context, which has the primary aim of preparing people for roles in enterprises; such roles could be as employees, entrepreneurs, employers or simply as self-employed persons. In Nigeria, business education is offered at the junior

secondary, secondary and post-secondary school levels. At the junior secondary school level, it comprises business studies as a pre-vocational subject. At this level, it serves as an introduction to the social sciences subjects and helps students to develop manipulative skills, inventiveness and respect for dignity of labor as well as preparing students for further studies and develops in them the understanding and attitudes needed for successful advancement in their educational pursuit (Epumepu, 2012). At the secondary and post secondary levels, its educational subjects include book keeping, keyboarding, marketing, accounting, office education, office management, store-keeping, co-operative education and desk top publishing/word processing as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (2004).

Business education as one of the aspect of vocational and technical education aim at preparing learners to acquire job skills, knowledge and vocational experience needed in a place of work which could be done currently under the traditional method of teaching. Uko Aviomoh and Ajuluchi (2008) observed business education as a major aspect of vocational and technical education strive to make an individual to be well armed with skills and knowledge so as to enable them secure employment either by establishing a small-scale outfit or by being gainfully employed thereby utilizing their skills. The problem of how to effectively structure the classroom to achieve the laudable goals of business education under

the traditional method of teaching/learning has become a major concern to both educators and students in the programme amidst global crisis so as to employ modern method of teaching to solve learning problem at that particular period. In the opinion of Kwache (2007), the pace of change brought about by new technologies has had a significant effect on the way people live, work, and play worldwide while education not exempted. This is the reason while new and emerging technologies are challenging the traditional process of teaching and learning, and the way education is managed. Globally, there is a paradigm shift from the traditional approach of teacher-centered learning to modern methods where ICT plays a significant role hence business education cannot be exempted. ICT has a great speed of providing flexibility, improvement in quality and quantity of learning instead of total dependence on textbooks and materials in prints as teaching and learning in business education has done in the past. The advantages of using the e-learning technology as an education tool ranges from capacity of students to personally learn needed skills and information almost in any field imaginable.

Through virtual learning, students of business education would be able to communicate, collaborate and cooperate with other learners worldwide and assess worldwide libraries irrespective of their place of domicile and bring to fulfillment the goal of business education as enshrined in

the National Policy on Education (2004). In the context of teachers' development e-learning can be used for both initial and continuing development through courses, workshops, and other activities, formal and informal, where students and practicing teachers learn about integrating ICTs across curriculum to support learning (Yusufu, 2007). In the era of global crisis such as COVID 19, the online learning will be useful for business education so as to enhance the ability of learners to acquire needed skills and knowledge without face to face interaction with the teachers.

Virtual learning and business education

COVID 19 necessitates the lockdown and social distancing measure which affect education programme in Nigeria and as a result of this, government in collaboration with world health organization searched for way to ameliorate difficulties confronting education amidst COVID 19. This emanate virtual learning as a process to disseminate learning information to students especially practical courses like business education so as to replace face to face method of teaching with online learning. The literal meaning of the word 'virtual' is 'the possible' taken from the Latin word "virtualis". Several circumstances and conditions influence the possibilities. (Podhajecka, 2018). This virtual process is not the actual or real process; instead, it happens in the place of an existing system having similar dynamics and aspirations.

Due to COVID-19, UNESCO (United

Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations) suggested that educational institutions adopt Virtual Teaching based on social distancing (Bansal, 2020). Business education programme could be affected with this social distancing provided online learning is not effective or put in place as alternative way to teach students during lockdown. Virtual learning is alternate to the face to face or traditional Teaching. Online or virtual Teaching is an online teaching process in which there is no physical participation of the teachers and students are mandatory and, they are located in different separate locations at the time of the teaching process in business education (Sanford, 2020). It is also possible that the participants are separated concerning time (Smyrnova-Trybulska, Kommers, Morze, & Malach, 2019). As the word, 'virtual' suggests to 'possible,' so it becomes essential to complete the teaching process by modifying according to the given circumstances.

The online educational environment faces some technical and methodological problems of information sharing and management. The primary functions of the virtual education process are communication, information sharing, and management or administration. For the virtual learning environment, the technologies, computer tools, and other IT sources have used to control the education environment, participants, and authenticity of communication (Gadre, Cudney, & Corns, 2011). The business education

programme utilized technologies and computer tools to disseminate learning information which is aligned with primary functions of virtual learning process as a result of this, virtual learning appeared to assist the learners to acquire practical skills and knowledge needed in a place of work amidst COVID19.

The educational institutions link the teachers and the students through some internal or external websites or any learning management systems for effective teaching of business education amidst COVID 19 (Crawley, 2012). It depends on the availability of the resources that an institution has. There are many online applications for the fulfillment of the task; someone is free while some are paid. The institutions, according to their needs and budget, avail them accordingly. If the existing online applications fail to satisfy the needs, then they can arrange to make new ones from the software engineers. These all tools fall in the category of virtual or online learning management system (Crawley, 2012). This online learning management system needs to have proper and relevant training of all the stakeholders of the teaching-learning process as teachers and students. Moreover, online teaching applications must be ensured regarding their reliability and authenticity because these are the only sources of connectivity between the stakeholders. If these seizures to work, the whole online teaching process for business education will collapse instantly.

In virtual learning process, the entire

participants in learning business education log in simultaneously online, and the single teacher or instructor delivers the teaching material in the form of the lecture. All the stakeholders of this process are involved in the process where information, discussion, question answering activity among others is practiced. These are called collaborative group-based learning. This seemed to necessitate effective teaching of business education amidst COVID 19 so as to ensure prompt actualization of its goal.

Benefits of virtual learning in Business Education

Virtual learning should be seen as offering solutions to several challenges currently facing higher education especially business education (Bansal, 202). Through virtual-learning, students of business education would be able to communicate, collaborate and cooperate with other learners worldwide and assess worldwide libraries irrespective of their geographical locations and bring to fulfillment the goal of business education as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (2004). According to Sharifabadi (2006) in Panda and Swain (2009), virtual learning will benefit teaching and learning in the following ways:

- for learners, virtual learning knows no time zones, and location and distance are not an issue;
- in asynchronous virtual learning, students can access the online business education materials at any

time;

- synchronous virtual learning allows for real time interaction between students and instructors;
- virtual learners can use the internet to access up-to-date and relevant learning materials, and can communicate with experts in the field in which they are studying;
- situated learning is facilitated, since learners can complete online courses while working on the job or in their own space, and can contextualize the learning;
- online materials can be updated as per the needs of the learners, and learners are able to see the changes at once, and;
- when learners are able to access materials on the internet, it is easier for instructors to direct them to appropriate information based on their needs.

Challenges of virtual learning in business education

- Poor monitoring: the online learning does not allow proper monitoring from teachers and it gives avenue for the learners to choose to be either industrious or lazed in leaning activities designed by the teachers.
- Lack of teacher-student, student to student interaction: since the method is designed so as to avoid social gathering and face to face discussion, there won't be any interaction

between teachers and students on learning activities in spite the fact that some aspects of business education allow such interaction.

- Other social activities cannot be performed: in business education programme, there are various field trips such as business seminars, SIWES and workshop which could not be performed through virtual learning amidst COVID 19
- Learning always at stake due to poor web connections and application: some students loose the interest in virtual learning whenever the web connection and application are obstructed or work erratically because it is possible for learners to divert attention to others unprofitable areas which likely to affect their concentration meanwhile business education need full concentration
- No alternate way of Teaching: in face to face learning, if teachers discover that students are not assimilate as expected, teacher may employ play away method or any best alternative method to instill the interest of students to learn effectively but in virtual learning, once the method have been designed for learning it could not be changed in line with class room situations.
- Unavailability of online facilities to all students, especially in remote areas: the most impediment factors to the virtual learning are unavailability

of online facilities to all students. This is due to economic situations of our country whereby government neglect education sectors and individual provide online facilities for his children amidst COVID 19 even some students from rural areas could not afford to buy data for online learning. Especially amidst COVID 19 majority of Nigerian strive for means of sustainability in term of basic needs rather than online facilities for their children.

Virtual learning tools use in delivery of business education lesson

Omolola (2019) posited that there are various tools used for business education lesson during the virtual classes as follows:

- **Computer-Based Training (CBT):** Computer-based training (CBT) is any course of instruction whose primary means of delivery is a computer. A CBT courseware may be delivered via a software product installed on a single computer, through a corporate or educational intranet, in this case, the teacher does not need internet or website. 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. Students can also take advantage of CBT to learn how to run computer applications, such as Microsoft Excel, MS-word, Power point and other Office packages that are related to their field of study.

- **Web-based Training:** Web-based training (WBT) is an innovative approach to distance learning in which computer-based training (CBT) is transformed by the technologies and methodologies of the World Wide Web, the Internet, and intranets (Kilby, 2009). Web-based training could be used to present business education contents live and in a structure promoting self-directed and self-paced instruction on any topic at any distance. WBT could also be used in the provision of remedial lessons to students. The teacher can also use it for evaluation and assessment of the students objectively.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Collaborative Learning is online learning, based on interaction with others learners/instructors (Siadaty and Taghiyareh, 2008). Virtual learning particularly gives room for collaborative and students 'centered learning. When using virtual learning

technology in business education, the entire teacher does it to guide the learners in a virtual classroom environment, through interactive online learning, such as shared whiteboards, shared application software, chat functionality and audio/video over the network. Meanwhile, Brown (1998) noted that there are three ways in which e-learning technology facilitates learning principles: through self-directed learning, through collaborative learning, and through critical analysis.

- **Informal virtual learning:** virtual learning can also help to facilitate informal learning in business education. Through internet and e-learning, the business education students can learn outside the course based materials, traditional classroom and can learn about other important things that affect their lives. Students also have the opportunity to learn during holidays and vacations without necessary being taught by his teacher. Martinez (2003) noted that incorporating technology like e-learning into education may provide students with experience that would otherwise not be available to them. For example, computer simulations allow students to discover principles through their own active engagement.

Conclusion

The study concluded that virtual learning has been a valuable method for distance learning so far adequate internet facilities is put in place especially amidst COVID 19 whereby social distancing and lockdown rules are order of the day. For effective teaching of business education that embedded with practical and theoretical aspect of learning, the virtual learning would have been the best alternative teaching method amidst COVID 19 so as to assist the learner to be fully engaged while the total lockdown rule has been observed but in Nigeria situation, majority of the citizen find it difficult to have access to virtual learning because of poverty level and technological backward of our country which impede online teaching amidst COVID 19.

Recommendation

In light of the discussion and conclusion, the following recommendations were drawn for this study:

- Government should make provision for internet facilities at all level of education especially Business Education programme
- Policy makers should ensure that every individual learner has access to virtual learning and this should extend to those who are domiciled at rural areas as well.
- There should be proper monitoring of virtual learning from teachers so as to ensure appropriate using of internet facilities for business education

programme amidst COVID 19.

- Education Administrators must consider practical aspect of business education programme while design virtual learning for the programme amidst COVID 19
- Teachers and students should be provided with the necessary training regarding virtual learning for active teaching of business education programme.
- Seminars should be conducted for the promotion and awareness among teachers and students as regards the usefulness of virtual learning in business education programme amidst COVID 19.

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