



DISTANCE LEARNING/E-LEARNING CONCEPTUAL LEVEL BY BUSINESS EDUCATORS AND BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study was designed to examine the distance/e-learning conceptual level by business educators and business education students in eleven colleges of education in south-west Nigeria. The survey design adopted focused on a population of 128 business educators and 550 business education students. Mean statistic was used to answer the three research questions used for the study. Results show that both business educators and students have high conceptual level of e-learning for the teaching and learning of business education courses. However, business educators noted poor electricity supply as the most limiting factor for the use of e-learning in the teaching and learning of business education, while students on their part bemoaned lack of well designed distance/e-learning curriculum for education programme as the most limiting factor. Recommendations include re-circulation of business education programme to imbibe heavy doses of distance/e-learning technology; modalities of distance/e-learning should be properly explained to business educators and students to drive home in detail, the opportunity inherent in learning technology among others.

Introduction

Learning is a social activity. It is constructed and bound by the context it is created (Winn, 1997). There is no doubt of the fact that educational needs and events are moving faster than what traditional synchronous methods can cope with. The world is looking for ways of educating more people efficiently and effectively at a shorter period than before, but the developing world still battles with the traditional synchronous methods as their yearly educational needs grow geometrically. More so, it is no longer in doubt amongst nations that knowledge holds the key to their future prosperity, social well-being and competitive advantage. There is high demand for well-educated warfare which has driven many nations to rethink their educational systems.

Educators are becoming pre-occupied with technological aspect of course design at the expense of attending to pedagogical, desired learning outcome and selecting of appropriate learning experience (Simonson, 2000). Distance learning has emerged in Nigeria as a mediated forum of instruction that has the entire attribute to become a major ally in overcoming the serious challenges faced by Nigeria society. Distance learning according to Glen (2005) refers to policies and practices that permit entry to learning with



no or minimum barriers with respect to age, gender, or time constraints and with recognition of prior learning. Dhanarajan (2001) sees distance education as the means of taking the teacher literally to the student, in that students are physically, separated from teacher which is often bridged by communication technologies. In this era of globalization, distance learning is viewed as e-learning and both are used interchangeably as initiative of globalization. Wilson (2001) stated that e-learning is construed in a variety of contexts, some as distance learning others as on line learning; yet others as network learning.

E-learning is seen as the process of delivering knowledge via electronic media, which include the internet, intranet, extranet, satellite broadcast, audio video tape, interactive TV and CD-ROM, electronic board and e-library. E-learning is a global phenomenon fuelled by a variety of economic, technological and social forces, as well as students' demand. The demands amongst students, employers and communities for lifelong learning and awareness amongst educators to the need to enhance the quality of traditional learning via greater interactivity, collaboration, access to resources and remote. Exchanges are some educational pressures necessitating e-learning. According to Anthony (2012) E-learning has been perceived by many authors as:

- Being convenient and flexible (Leasure, Davis & Theleyon, 2000)
- Offering a greater access to quality learning resources (Sener & Stover, 2000)
- Increasing students' motivation and self-esteem (Kearsley, 1996)
- Promoting learner participation and interactivity (Maenoft, 2004)
- Improving learning quality (Fjermestand, Hiltz & Zhang, 2005)
- Promoting sharing of learning resources and spaces (Wheeter, 2005)
- Promoting collaborative learning (Reil, 2000) and autonomous learning.

E-learning is browser based learning. It has the capability of using network technologies to create, foster, deliver and facilitate learning anytime and anywhere. It enhances the delivery of individualized, comprehensive, dynamic learning content in real time, aiding the development of communities of knowledge, linking learners and practitioners with experts (Laurillard, 2007 cited by Adirika, 2012). E-learning/Distance learning is a well-come development in the teaching and learning of business education. More so, for the programme to remain relevant in global competitive world distance learning system/e-learning should be graciously adopted. Ikelegbe (2007) noted that education in Nigeria cannot be relevant without adequate preparation of new generation of learners to effectively use the new information and communication technology in their professional practices. Dabesaki (2005) insisted that distance learning/e-learning ensures broad viability and availability of educational opportunities and that learning materials can be accessed irrespective of time and space. Adirika (2012) viewed that teacher and learner conceptions of educational facilities, processes and procedure could be explored to advantage for improvement purposes at least through distance/e-learning.



Purpose of the Study

The study sampled the views of business educators and their students to determine:

- (i) The e-learning conceptual levels of business educators and students in the teaching and learning of business education courses.
- (ii) The desirable e-learning features in the teaching and learning of business education courses.
- (iii) The inhibitive factors to the use of e-learning in the teaching and learning of business education programme.

Research Questions

To guide data collection, the following research questions were raised.

- (i) What are the e-learning conceptual level of business educators and their students in the teaching and learning of business education courses?
- (ii) What are the desirable e-learning features in the teaching and learning of business education courses?
- (iii) What are the inhibitive factors to the use of e-learning in the teaching and learning of business education

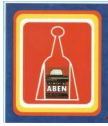
Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of study consisted of all business educators and business education students in eleven public colleges of education in south-west Nigeria. All the 128 business educators were used and 50 business education students were sampled from each college of education given a total number of 550 business education students. The questionnaire arranged on a 4 point scale of Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D); and Strongly Disagree (SD) rated 4,3,2 and 1 respectively was used. Means statistic was used to answer the research questions.

Research Questions

Table 1: Mean Scores of Business Educators and Students Conceptual Level of e-learning

S/N	ITEMS E-LEARNING	BUSINESS X	EDUCATORS SD	STUDENTS X SD
1.	Eliminates distances and subsequent transportation problems	3.17	0.98	3.45 0.88
2.	Incorporates self motivation and communication	3.30	0.83	3.39 0.74



3.	Content are designed with media that can be accessed from properly equipped computer terminal	3.13	0.98	3.20	0.68
4.	internet technology assists the user in assessing e-learning	3.27	0.89	3.22	0.92
5.	Is a term used to describe a means of teaching through web technology	3.21	0.90	3.27	0.96
6.	On line application facilitates e-learning	2.48	1.13	2.67	0.76
7.	Blended e-learning includes elements of web interaction and in-person interaction.	2.42	1.06	2.66	1.02
8.	Can either be synchronous or Asynchronous	2.50	1.08	2.47	0.96
9.	Class structure addresses how the instruction is administered.	2.38	1.15	2.42	0.98
10.	Can be self-paced instructor-led, or self-study with own expert.	3.25	0.94	3.27	0.92
11.	Can be achieved by utilizing any form of technology that sustains information yielding media.	2.65	1.14	3.30	0.85
12.	Video/Audio tape, aside from being, an obsolete, technology is still used in e-learning	2.32	1.05	2.70	1.05
	Grand mean	2.84		3.00	

Data presented in Table 1 revealed that all the items except 6, 7, 9 and 12 for Business educators and items 8 and 9 for students have mean ratings above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that business educators have low conceptual level of face to face communication, web and in person interaction, class structure, while the sampled students have low conceptual levels of synchronous and asynchronous nature of e-learning and its class structure. However, grand means of 2.84 and 3.00 confirm an overall high conceptual level of e-learning for the teaching and learning of business education.

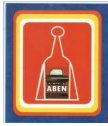


Table 2. Desirable e-learning features for teaching and learning of Business Education

S/N	FEATURES THAT MAKE E-LEARNING DESIRABLE	BUSINESS X	EDUCATORS SD	STUDENTS X SD
13.	E-learning is more cost effective than traditional learning	2.09	1.07	2.49 1.12
14.	It can be done in any geographical location and there are no travel expenses.	2.31	1.12	2.46 1.52
15.	Students can learn at their own pace	3.07	1.09	3.02 1.05
16.	It generates enthusiasm for global information in business education learning.	3.35	0.78	2.36 0.94
17.	It helps in further developing of business educators professional skills and competencies	3.24	0.89	3.15 1.12
18.	Learners can sit in their homes and do the learning if they desire.	3.34	0.57	3.20 0.94
	Grand mean	2.90		2.86

Table 2 reveals that all the highlighted desirable factors scored above the mean of 2.50 with exception of items 13 (x, 2.09 x 2.49) and 14 (x 2.31 x 2.46). Both the business educators and their students disagreed with the cost effectiveness and zero travel expenses posture of e-learning in the teaching and learning of business education.

Table 3: The Inhibitive Factors to the use of e-learning in teaching and learning of business education.

S/N	ITEMS	BUSINESS X	EDUCATORS SD	STUDENTS X SD
19.	Insufficient ICT facilities for business education teaching and learning	3.09	1.06	3.24 0.89
20.	ICT phobia syndrome	2.36	1.12	2.47 1.10
21.	Poor electricity supply	3.34	0.80	3.21 0.71
22.	Non availability of internet connectivity	3.18	0.91	3.10 0.96
23.	Lack of well designed e-learning curriculum for	3.25	0.96	3.26 0.88



	business education programme.					
24.	Lack of requisite skills to assess students on line assignments	3.26	0.87	3.23	0.89	
25.	Lack of in-service training to prepare teachers for e-learning implementation in business education.	3.29	0.88	3.25	0.89	
26.	The learners need to have computer skills with programmes such as word processing, internet browsers and email	3.19	0.92	3.14	0.93	
	Grand mean	3.12		3.11		

Table 3 above shows that business educators consider poor electricity supply as the most inhibiting factors in the use of e-learning (x, 3.34) while students view lack of well designed e-learning curriculum for business education programme as the most serious factor (x, 3.26). Business educators and students did not consider ICT phobia syndrome (x, 2.36 x 2.47 respectively) as limiting factors in e-learning application for business education programme.

Discussion

The responses from Table 1 reflect a relatively high conceptual level of both the business educators and the student in e-learning. However, it could be inferred that they were not conversant with the synchronous and asynchronous modes of e-learning as well as its class structure and face to face nature of teaching and learning. This agreed with Cooke (2004), that it has been realized that one simply cannot put information on the web without a learning strategy for the users which must fit into the students lives. From Table 2, both the business educators and students agreed with the highlighted desirable factors with grand means of 2.90 and 2.86 respectively, which indicates that both do not differ much in their conception. This agreed with Okele (2008) that computer based education is of immense benefit and can improve teaching and learning. It could be inferred that both business educators and their students disagreed with the expressed cost effectiveness and zero travel expenses as both must make move to lay hands on the learning management systems.

On inhibitive factors to the application of e-learning in business education, both business educators and students did not accept ICT phobia syndrome as impediment (x, 2.36 x, 2.47) respectively. Instead business educators noted poor electricity supply as the most limiting factor (x, 3.34). While students on their part bemoaned lack of well



designed e-learning curriculum for business education programme as the most limiting factor. This finding agrees with Azih, and Nwosu (2012) that several factors such as high cost of procurement and installation of e-learning facilities, shortage of skilled manpower, poor power supply among others hamper the usage of e-learning in the teaching and learning of business education courses.

Implications of the Findings

These findings have implications for the achievement of the goal of business education as enshrined in NCCE...especially at this technological age where the whole world has become a global village. It has significant implication for designing effective curriculum on business education programme. A new curriculum that will sooth the current technological age, equipped with pedagogy skills needed for the effective discharge of professional duties of teachers (item 23) must be designed.

Tools are required for effective and adequate teaching and learning. It appears unrealistic to make business educators face the challenges of imparting knowledge through distance learning or e-learning to students without enabling and facilitating tools especially to learners from different background.

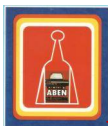
Conclusion

The fact remains that effective teaching and appropriate acquisition of learning in business education through distance education or e-learning require the use of appropriate and adequate e-learning facilities in teacher and student preparation. In this information age and globalized era, educating without appropriate and adequate e-learning technologies would make the achievement of educational objectives difficult. Adopting distance learning system, e-learning properly with appropriate technologies and other needs is important to make business education programmes relevant in the globalized community.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the above findings and discussions.

1. Business education programmes should be re-curriculated to imbibe heavy doses of e-learning technologies, through this, teachers would begin to use and also master the ICT/e-learning technologies themselves so that when they become certified, they would not find them strange.
2. The modalities of distance learning/e-learning should be properly explained to business educators and students to drive home in detail, the opportunities inherent in the learning technology.



3. The problems associated with the use of internet through distance/ e-learning should be addressed by curriculum designers and to proffer solution to the problem of tracking participants' performance in a central data base and making upgrading easy.
4. Power problems should also be addressed by the government to assist this power dependent learning technology.

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