



APPLICATION AND CHALLENGES OF E-LEARNING IN BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

Dr. Njoku, Julie U. & Nwachukwu, J.C.

*Department of Office and Management Technology,
Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, Owerri
juliechukwuemeka4@gmail.com*

Abstract

The study investigated the application and challenges of e-learning in business education programme in universities in South-East, Nigeria. The study adopted an inferential survey design. The population of the study was all the 67 business educators in South-East Nigerian universities. All the 67 business educators were used for the study, hence no sampling. The research instrument for this study is titled: Application and Challenges of E-learning in Business Education Programme Scale (ACEBEPS). The instrument was validated by specialists in business education and educational measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha with internal consistency index of 0.83. The instrument was administered by the researchers and three research assistants. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while one sample t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. It was found among others that the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East Nigerian universities was not above average. Inequality of access to the technology itself by all the students, it is very expensive to get some of the software for e-learning programme and electricity instability were the major challenges that hindered the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East Nigerian universities. The researchers recommended among others that adequate funding should be made available by the government so as to apply e-learning in business education programmes in South-East, Nigerian Universities.

Keywords: *Application, Challenges, E-learning, Business Education*

Introduction

Education lies at the heart of every society. It is a key and a vital element in the broad development of a nation's capacity to address and solve problems. Education forms the basis for the proactive and positive economic, social and political changes in the society. One way to empower the country is by exposing the youth to the rudiments of skill acquisition, knowledge and competence which can be got through business education.

Business education is an educational programme which involves the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competences which make the recipients/beneficiaries proficient in business skills/endeavours (Aquah, 2014). It is an umbrella under which all business programmes such as marketing, business administration, office technology and management and accounting take a shield. Business education as a discipline is expected to expose its recipients to diverse curricula, hence, it is that type of education that inculcates in its recipients attitudes, knowledge, skills and values that are required in the business world (Baugh & Sullivan, 2005). It is a means of producing a healthy, literate, self-reliant citizenry that would create wealth for human development, when they become self-employed.

According to Aquah (2014), the philosophy of the business education curriculum includes:-
To lay a foundation and / or build on the foundation at any school level in the pedagogy of education system.



To equip the learner with saleable skills (skills which will enable them, acquire, sustain and grow on their jobs) create jobs, be self-employed, and be employers of labour, become better and wiser consumers of goods and services.

To prepare the individuals for higher studies in business education

For business education to provide the individual with the knowledge, skills and attitude needed to take up readily available job openings in the global job market, it becomes imperative that the educational system must function optimally and the teachers be professionally equipped to provide the requisite knowledge, skills and attitude that will enable the individuals avail themselves of the job openings and opportunities in the global market. One way of ensuring professionalism of the business education teachers and their growth is through the application of e-learning.

The development of e-learning in Nigeria can be traced back to the development of telegraphy, which began in 1886, when e-cable connections were established by the colonial masters between, Lagos and the colonial office in London, to transmit information and receive feedback. By 1893, all government offices in Lagos were linked up with telephone services for easy communication, and later, other parts of the country were linked up (Ajadi, Salawu & Adeoye, 2008). It should however be stressed that in Nigerian schools, the commonest type of e-learning adopted was in form of lecture notes on CD-ROM which can be played when the learners desire. The challenge of this method is that number of students per computer was unattractive as compared to when lectures were received in the classrooms.

E-learning, which has become a major topic of discussion among scholars and writers in recent times, and is being used in various ways, has been variously defined. Generally, many scholars agreed that the concept is synonymous with online learning. According to Bhabal (2008), the term e-learning is used in a variety of ways and comprises of such terms as online learning, Computer Based Learning (CBL), Web Based Training (WBT), Online Resource Based Learning (ORBL), Networked Collaborative Learning (NCL), and Computer Supported Collaborative Learning. E-learning can be interpreted as electronic learning;- the learning that involves the use of Internet; learning from a distance via the aid of the Internet and/or other electronic gadgets (Eke, 2010). E-learning involves the use of technology to enhance learning including digital collaboration, satellite broadcasting, CD ROMs, Video and audio conferencing, mobile technology, interactive TV and web-based technologies (Amadi, 2015).

E-learning can be considered a natural evolution of distance learning, which has always taken advantage of the latest tools to emerge in the context of technologies for structuring education (Sangrà, Vlachopoulos & Cabrera, 2012). Umar (2013) and Jegede (2005) described electronic learning as the presentation and delivery of the materials using the electronic media. Ajayi, (2005) defined e-learning as learning through electronic means such as the web, internet or other multimedia materials like computer, projector, television, audio and audio visual cassette and radio disc. The learners, whether far or near, have easy access to quality learning materials; robust and unlimited interaction with instructional contents, facilitators and other learners and are given support and appropriate time to make reasonable and responsible contributions to the learning process. Olaniyi (2016) opined that e-learning is all about learning that occurs through the internet. According to Olaniyi, the convergence of the internet and the learning or internet-enabled learning is called e-



learning. The use of network technologies is for creating, fostering, delivering and facilitating learning anytime and anywhere. E-learning is also the delivery of individualized, comprehensive and dynamic learning content in real time, aiding the development of communities of knowledge and linking learners and practitioners with experts.

E-learning can be classified into two broad categories:- synchronous and asynchronous (Naidu, 2006). In distinguishing between the two major forms of e-learning, Aboderin and Kumuyi (2013) opined that synchronous form is so-called because of its comprehensive features that allow for interactivity between the learning content and the learners. It has in-built features like the forum chatting, audio-effect. Just like in distance learning, students are separated from the teacher, therefore, synchronous form of e-learning aims at providing multi-outlet opportunities to meaningfully engage the learner and therefore aid comprehension. Asynchronous form of e-learning by design, has multifarious features, while the former does not. It only presents the learning content for the students to read, internalise and download if need be. Also, whereas synchronous e-learning allows for immediate feedback as much as possible, asynchronous may not necessarily allow for immediate feedback.

The main purpose of e-learning is to increase accessibility to education, reduce costs and time as well as improve students' academic performance. This approach of learning ensures that different students in different continents attend the same classes almost at the same time. Nowadays, technology is becoming the medium for teaching and learning without being in university campuses. This technology-enabled instructional method is aimed at improving the quality of education and students' academic performance. It has been found that students in higher educational institutions that engaged in e-learning, generally performed better than those in face-to-face courses. Lorrain, (2007) found that students who participated in online/e-learning achieved better grades than students who studied through traditional approach. As a result of this finding, e-learning is growing very fast and becoming popular. This is why many higher educational institutions are adapting to virtual learning systems.

E-learning is widely used in many universities in the world today. In some universities, their e-learning does not add any value to the teaching and learning activities of the University and perhaps they do not investigate the impact of e-learning on students' academic performance. Much research has not been done on the relationship of e-learning use and students' academic performance in universities. Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) has an e-learning site designed for teaching and learning, using module software package, but this is not being fully utilized by both students and lecturers (Heeger, 2007). One of the first innovations in actual e-learning was the LMS or Learning Management System. The first Learning Management Systems (LMS) offered off-the-shelf platforms for front-end registration and course cataloguing, and they tracked skills management and reporting on the back-end (Clark & Heaney, 2003). This enabled schools and companies to place courses online and be able to track students' progress, communicate with students effectively and provide a place for real-time discussions.

Empirically, Azubuike and Offordile's (2015) study revealed that most schools lacked some of the e-learning devices and the problems facing the use of e-learning network in teaching included poor power supply, financial problems, low computer literacy level, low quality and expensive nature of VSAT connections. Olukayode's (2015) findings revealed that challenges of e-learning included



lack of computers, shortage of Internet facilities, students' lack of access to e-learning facilities and tools, high cost of software and erratic power supply (a major challenge), while prospects included promoting distance learning, extending the frontiers of knowledge, eradicating illiteracy, and making education more effective. Okoro's (2013) study also revealed constraints facing the teaching of ICT such as inadequate ICT facilities/equipment; frequent electricity interruption of ICT facilities and poor implementation of ICT policies. Moreover, the study revealed some strategies for enhancing the teaching of ICT to include: adequate funding of ICT facilities; provision of adequate ICT equipment, provision of adequate ICT facilities among others. Aboderin and Kumuyi's (2013) findings revealed that there was shortage of e-learning tools such as internet, computers, e-mail facilities, multimedia, scanner, printer, VCD player and digital camera. It was also revealed that the few available ones such as computers, scanner and printer- are not utilized because the teachers lacked the knowledge and skills of

Despite the role of business education to national development, it appears that its objectives have not been realized. One begins to ponder about poor application of e-learning in South-East, Nigerian universities. The question that comes to mind is, is e-learning applied in business education programme? What are the major challenges that could hinder its application in universities in South-East, Nigeria.

The general purpose of this study was to ascertain the application and challenges of e-learning in business education programme in universities in South-East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study set out to:

ascertain the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities,

find out the major challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities,

The following research questions guided the study:

What is the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities?

What are the major challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities?

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

The mean score of the respondents on the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities is not significantly above the criterion mean of 25.

The mean score of the respondents on challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities is not significantly above the criterion mean of 25.

Method

The study adopted an inferential survey design. The population of the study was all the 67 business educators in South-East Nigerian universities. All the 67 business educators were used for the study, hence no sampling. The research instrument for this study is titled: Application and Challenges of E-learning in Business Education Programme Scale (ACEBEPS). The instrument was

structured on a four point rating scale. The instrument was validated by specialists in Business Education and Educational Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the scale was established using Cronbach alpha with internal consistency index of 0.83. The instrument was administered by the researchers and three other trained research assistants. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while one sample t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The criterion mean of 2.50 was used as benchmark for decision of the items that helped to answer the research questions.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities?

Table 1: Responses on the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities

S/N	Items Statement: The university apply e-learning in the following areas for Business Education Programme;	<i>n</i>	<i>x</i>	S	Remarks
1.	Undertake virtual electronic dissections	67	1.74	.56	Low Extent
2.	Establish e-learning web site for the department	67	1.44	.60	Low Extent
3.	Blended learning method of business education instruction	67	1.54	.72	Low Extent
4.	Presentation of papers at conference	67	2.56	.52	High Extent
5.	Packaged business education curriculum course content	67	1.47	.61	Low Extent
6.	Publication of research works	67	1.35	.66	Low Extent
7.	Interactive lesson presentation packages	67	1.52	.63	Low Extent
8.	Digital libraries	67	1.47	.73	Low Extent
9.	Virtual libraries	67	1.51	.68	Low Extent
10.	Open access of learning experiences	67	1.49	.71	Low Extent
Cluster Mean			16.09		
Mean of Item Means			1.61		

Table 1 shows the mean responses of the lecturers on the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities. The data revealed that all the items 1-10 except for item 4 are considered as low extent having recorded mean scores below the criterion mean of 2.50. The standard deviations show that they are far away from the mean and also that scores in the distribution are close to each other. It was also indicates that the mean of mean is 1.61 showing that the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities is low.

Research Question 2

What are the major challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities?

Table 2: Responses on major challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities.

S/N	Item Statement: challenges in the application of e-learning in business education;	n	x	S	Remarks
11.	Inequality of access to the technology itself by all the students	67	3.40	.69	Agreed
12.	Technophobia: Most of the students have no computer education background	67	3.31	.70	Agreed
13.	The cost of accessing internet is still very high in Nigeria	67	3.33	.59	Agreed
14.	Most of the admitted students have no information technology/computer education knowledge	67	3.35	.60	Agreed
15.	Most students are reluctant to take responsibility for their own learning	67	3.33	.82	Agreed
16.	It is very expensive to get some of the softwares for e-learning programme	67	3.62	.50	Agreed
17.	There are few technical staff to maintain the system	67	3.81	.40	Agreed
18.	Electricity instability as a major setback for our technological development	67	3.57	.50	Agreed
19.	Inadequate funding	67	3.61	.54	Agreed
20.	Inadequate skilled manpower	67	3.70	.61	Agreed
Cluster Mean		35.03			
Mean of Item Means		3.50			

Table 2 shows the mean responses of the lecturers on the major challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities. The data reveal that all the items (11-20) are considered as agreed having recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. A look at the standard deviations shows that they are far away from the mean and also that scores in the distribution are close to each other. It is also indicates that the mean of mean is 3.50 showing that the above factors are the major challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities.

Hypothesis 1

Ho₁: The mean score of the respondents on the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities is not significantly above the criterion mean of 25.

Table 3: One sample t-test for the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities

N	\bar{x}	μ	S	S.E	df	t _{cal}	t _{tab.}	Decision
67	16.09	25	3.03	.37	66	-24.08	1.645	Ho Accepted

Table 3 reveals that the t-calculated of -24.08 is less than the t-tabulated of 1.645. Thus, indicating that the mean score of the respondents on the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities is not significantly above the criterion

mean of 25. This implies that the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities is not above average.

Hypothesis 2

Ho₂: The mean score of the respondents on challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities is not significantly above the criterion mean of 25.

Table 4: One sample t-test for on challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities

N	\bar{x}	μ	S	S.E	df	t _{cal}	t _{tab.}	Decision
67	35.03	25	3.11	.38	66	21.13	1.645	Ho Rejected

Table 4 reveals that the t-calculated of 21.13 is greater than the t-tabulated of 1.645. Thus, indicating that the mean score of the respondents on challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities is significantly above the criterion mean of 25. This implies that the major challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities are rated above average.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed in this study that the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities is low. This result was confirmed by the inference that the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in Nigerian universities is not above average. This finding is supported by Aboderin and Kumuyi (2013) who held that: there is shortage of e-learning tools such as internet, computers, e-mail facilities, multimedia, scanner, printer, VCD player, digital camera among others. It was also revealed that the few available ones such as computers, scanner and printer were not utilized because the teachers lack the knowledge and skills of computer application.

It was also found in this study that factors such as inequality of access to the technology itself by all the students, it is very expensive to get some of the softwares for e-learning programme and electricity instability are the major challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities. It was also inference that the major challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in Nigerian universities were rated above average. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Azubuike and Offordile (2015) that most schools lack some of the e-learning devices and the problems facing the use of e-learning network in teaching include poor power supply, financial problems, low computer literacy level, low quality and expensive nature of VSAT connections. Olukayode's (2015) findings also revealed that the challenges of e-learning included lack of computers, shortage of Internet facilities, students' lack of access to e-learning facilities and tools, high cost of software and erratic power supply (a major challenge), while prospects included promoting distance learning, extending the frontiers of knowledge, eradicating illiteracy, and making education more effective.



Conclusion

Based on the findings, the researchers conclude that the extent of application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities is not above average. Inequality of access to the technology itself by all the students, it is very expensive to get some of the softwares for e-learning programme and electricity instability are the major challenges that hinder the application of e-learning in business education programme in South-East, Nigerian universities, and they are rated above average.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made;

Adequate funding should be made available by the government so as to apply e-learning in business education programmes in South-East, Nigerian Universities.

The issue of poor power supply to the universities should be solved by the government so as to establish an adequate e-learning application for business education programme and alternative power source should be incorporated to supplement the existing ones.

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