

PERCEPTION OF VIRTUAL LEARNING PRACTICES AND INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY OF STUDENTS' IN SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract: The study therefore investigated perceptions of virtual learning practices and instructional delivery of students' in selected tertiary institutions in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically were to; lecturers' and students' perceptions of the integration of available virtual learning practices into the assessment of instruction in students' degree programs and lecturers' and students' perceptions of the strategies employed by public universities in Enugu State for integrating virtual learning applications into degree programmes of selected tertiary institutions in Enugu State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study was 5437 which comprised 839 academic staff and 4598 final year students in University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Enugu State University of Science and Technology, ESUT. The sample for the study was 523 respondents which comprised 75 lecturers and 448 final year students. The instrument for data collection was a researcher structured questionnaire. The findings of the study showed that there is no significant difference between lecturers' and students' mean ratings on the perception integration of virtual learning practices on instructional delivery of students in selected tertiary institutions' and there is no significant difference between lecturers' and students' mean ratings on the strategies adopted by tertiary institutions in Enugu State for integrating virtual learning perception. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that educational institutions offering online courses and programmes should organize seminars, webinars and conferences for their facilitators and students on online learning perception.

Keywords: Perception, virtual learning, practices, instructional delivery, students', tertiary institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The widespread of the coronavirus known as Covid-19 hindered education throughout the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) established Covid-19 prevention measures, which every nation adopted in an effort to slow the virus's rapid spread (Ayimbila, *et al*, 2024). These actions include; keeping a distance from others, isolating oneself, refraining from hugs and handshakes, constantly washing one's hands, avoiding crowds, and other preventive measures (Ayimbila, *et al*, 2024).

The present Covid-19 significantly impacted all human activity mobility, including educational activity mobility (Faizaturrohmah, Sukarni, & Ngafif, 2022). Teaching and learning activities were moved from the traditional face-to-face classroom setting to a digital setting by the Covid-19 outbreak (Santis, Bellini, Sannicandro, & Minerva, 2020). With the rapid development of information and communication technology, many colleges and universities have offered online courses as a viable alternative to traditional face-to-face instruction.

Online education, according to Harasim (2019) is a new domain of learning that combines distance education with the practice of face-to-face instruction utilizing computer-mediated communication. In view of Volery (2020) online learning delivery is a form of distributed learning enabled by the Internet. Today, new technologies, such as the Internet, streaming video, and google meet now make higher education more accessible and affordable for many students, and for those who would have been unable to pursue higher education in a traditional in-class setting (Bianco, Car-Chellman, & Alison, 2020).

Generally, online education has the following key features according to Ascough (2022). a) it provides a learning experience that is different from the traditional classroom, as the learners do not participate in person in a physical classroom. (b) Communication is via computer and World Wide Web, (c) social dynamic of the learning environment is changed, and (d) discrimination and prejudice relating to individuals' appearance, composure, and attitude are minimized.

Most tertiary institutions in Enugu State shifted from the traditional face-to-face mode of instruction to online learning due to Covid-19 pandemic. Online learning has numerous benefits for facilitators and students. Online learning is less expensive and also convenient for students to access education at anywhere and anytime. Online learning supports students in learning individually and collaboratively by utilizing various forms of online learning platforms (Anwar & Wahid, 2021). Online learning promotes independent learning and reduces dependences of students towards teacher's support (Kumi-Yeboah, Dogbey, & Yuang, 2017).

Despite these numerous advantages, educational institutions, teachers and students faces numerous challenges in implementing online education. Since online learning is new in educational institutions, most schools find it difficult to implement it effectively. Instructors and students are finding it very challenging to involve in online learning. This is as a result of inadequate training for students and facilitators on online learning. Based on that, the study seeks to investigate perception of virtual learning practices and instructional delivery of students' in selected tertiary institutions in Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

Online teaching and learning were introduced in the Nigerian educational institution during the outbreak of the novel coronavirus popularly known as Covid-19. Online instruction was initiated with the aim of engaging students in teaching and learning process while they stay at home. Workshops, seminars, webinars and conferences were organized for all facilitators on online teaching and learning to enable them deliver effectively to students. Although, facilitators were given training on e-teaching and learning, little or no proper training was given to the students and this negatively affected them academically. Most students come from places where

internet connectivity is very poor. Others also come from communities where power outage is very frequent which hinder their effective participation in online classes. Students from poor families also find it difficult to purchase devices needed for effective participation in online classes. Based on that, the study seeks to investigate perception of virtual learning practices and instructional delivery of students' in selected tertiary institutions in Enugu State.

The main objective of the study was to investigate the perception of virtual learning practices on instructional delivery of students' in selected tertiary institutions in Enugu State: specific objectives were to;

1. Lecturers' and students' perceptions of the integration of available virtual learning practices into the assessment of instruction in students' degree programs in selected tertiary institutions in Enugu State.
2. Lecturers' and students' perceptions of the strategies employed by public universities in Enugu State for integrating virtual learning applications into degree programmes of selected tertiary institutions in Enugu State.

The following hypotheses were formulated;

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of lecturers and students regarding the integration of virtual learning applications into the evaluation of instruction for degree programmes at selected tertiary institutions in Enugu State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of lecturers and students regarding the strategies employed by public universities in Enugu State for integrating virtual learning applications into degree programmes of selected tertiary institutions in Enugu State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Virtual Learning Practices

Online learning is the process of accessing teaching and learning via information and communication technologies. By utilizing information, communication, and technology, online learning is a process that is aided and encouraged. Online learning is high-tech learning in which a class can be created everywhere by using internet (Kucirkova, Petr, & Hana, 2022). When knowledge is transmitted through the use of electronic technology, it is referred to as "online learning" or "E-learning" (Thomas, Thakkar, & Ghanekar, 2021). Online learning is also known as blended learning, web-based learning, e-learning, computer-mediated learning and open learning (Dhawan, 2020). Online learning is learning that takes place online or through a computer connected to the internet in a synchronous classroom where students engage with the teacher and are not restricted by their geographical location.

E-learning

E-learning as a sub-system within ICT, is the electronic process which enhances the delivery and administration of learning opportunities and support via computer, networked and web-based technology to help individual performance and development. E-learning, according to (Amer, 2014) is defined as "a process of teaching and learning using electronic media, including computers and its various software, networks, the internet, electronic libraries, and others.

Instructional Delivery of Students'

Instructional delivery refers to the interaction among the student, the teacher, the content, and the knowledge/skills/dispositions students will need for learning and collaborating with others in a diverse society and rapidly changing world. Education is an important element in the progress and advancement of societies, and from this point of view, societies have sought to develop the educational process in various fields (Abdeldayem and Al Dulaimi, 2020).

Perception

Assessing students' perception involves identifying the processes through which individuals acquire information, interpret, organize or make sense of their environment (Tolentino, Cruz, & Ablaza, 2022). Perception is an individual interpretation of something (Amir, Fediyanto, Rudyanto, Nur, & Tortop, 2020). Perception is the brain's capacity to transform incoming stimuli into the sense (Sugihartono, 2017). Perception is the experience of things, events, and connections that is gained through the continual gathering and interpretation of information (Rakhmat, 2000). Perception is a cognitive process that helps students to interpret and comprehend their environment (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2023).

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory was propounded by Bandura in 1986. It is a psychological framework that emphasizes the role of social interactions, observational learning, and cognitive processes in human behaviour. Bandura's theory posits that human behaviour is shaped by cognitive processes, social interactions and environmental factors. It emphasizes the role of observational learning, self efficacy and triadic reciprocal causation in understanding and predicting behaviour. The study of social cognitive theory is the study of the information processing of the mind. All processes of thought fall within the realm of cognition. These processes operate by manipulating information that comes into the mind. When the mind receives new information, it does two things: codes it as 'new' information or retrieves it from memory as 'not new' information. For this reason, cognition also means knowing.

In social cognitive theory, the learner is viewed as thoroughly integrated with the environment within which he or she is learning. The learner's cognitive responses, behaviours and environment all work together to create learning. Learners observe models and build self-efficacy, their belief that they can accomplish the work modelled. Based on the learner's understanding of why it is important to learn something and their belief that they can accomplish the learning, learners will then self-regulate their learning and become proactive in their efforts to gain mastery. Bandura pioneered this body of theory and this basic concept of the learner integrated into the social environment.

The above theory is relevant to this study in the sense that it emphasizes the needs for organizations to relate to new things in order to gain meaningful knowledge for their usage. Bandura's social cognitive theory is relevant to this study because virtual learning applications often provide opportunities for students to observe and learn

from instructional videos, recorded lectures, or demonstrations. By witnessing the positive outcomes experienced by their peers, students may be more motivated to engage actively and perform well in the virtual learning environment.

Social Cognitive theory emphasizes the interaction between individuals, their environment and their cognitive processes but failed to take cognizance of the active construction of knowledge by learners. Therefore, this is the rationale for which constructivist learning theory was propounded by Jean Piaget in 1967 remains imperative for this study.

Empirical Review

Ela (2021) conducted a study on the utilization of e-learning facilities for effective instructional process in tertiary institutions, Rivers State. Findings from the study showed that there is significant difference between lecture and students rating regarding on the proficiency of lecturers and that of students in the utilization of e-learning facilities in tertiary institutions.

Oladeji and Sikiru-Issa (2021) conducted a study on awareness and utilization of e-learning technologies in teaching and learning of business education courses in universities in Kwara State. The findings of this study showed that lectures and students are aware of synchronous e-learning technologies in teaching and learning of business education courses.

Ayimbila, Akantagriwon, Awuni and Ayamba (2024) studied students' perceptions towards online learning in the upper east region in Nigeria. This study therefore investigated students' perceptions towards online learning. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in sampling participants for the study. Data was analysed using inferential statistics (ANOVA) and descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and percentage). The interview data was also analysed using thematic analysis. It was also found that online learning saves money and students time since they do not need to travel to the study centers.

Chima, Onyebuchi and Idowu (2024) examined online learning and community engagement: Strategies for promoting inclusivity and collaboration in education in Nigeria. This review explored strategies aimed at promoting inclusivity and collaboration in online education settings. Firstly, it delves into the significance of creating a supportive online learning environment conducive to diversity. Moreover, integrating collaborative learning activities such as group projects and peer reviews promotes active engagement and facilitates the exchange of diverse perspectives. Furthermore, the review highlights the importance of instructor involvement in fostering inclusive and collaborative online learning environments.

Ajao, Olagunju, Abubakar, Yusuf and David (2024) examined assessment of e-learning system adopted by the universities in kwara state during covid-19 in Nigeria. This study therefore, examined by assessing the e-learning system adopted by the Universities in Kwara State during COVID-19. The findings revealed among others that, students were not satisfied with the e-learning system platforms adopted by the University for Instructional Delivery during COVID-19 due to the challenges they encountered such as poor network, high cost of data, limited access to the platforms etc.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study was 5437 which comprised 839 academic staff and 4598 final year students in University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Enugu State University of Science and Technology, ESUT (2023/2024 session). The sample for the study was 523 copies (75 from lecturers and 448 from final year students). In order to draw the sample size for the study, the researcher used stratified, proportionate random sampling techniques. For each of stratum (University), ten percent (10%) of the lecturers and students were randomly sampled. This is in line with Uzoagulu (2013), who posited that when the population for a known study is in thousands the researcher can make use of a desired percent for the study. The instrument for data collection was a researcher structured questionnaire titled perception of virtual learning practices and instructional delivery of students' on tertiary institutions on Enugu State. The researcher used frequency and percentages to answer research question 1, but used mean scores and standard deviations to answer research questions 2-5. The null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistic at .05 level of significance. In rating the mean, each response option had a numerical value based on real limit of numbers: SA = 3.50-4.00; A = 2.50-3.49; D = 1.50-2.49; SD = 0.00-1.49 for research questions 2-5.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of lecturers and students regarding the integration of virtual learning practices on perception of instruction for degree programmes in selected tertiary institutions.

Table 1: Summary of t-test Analysis on the Mean ratings of lecturers and students on their perception on instructional delivery of students.

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	p-value	Decision
Lecturers	75	2.64	.92	521	.085	Do not Reject H ₀₃
Students	448	2.78	.93			

The data presented in Table 3 indicates that at 521 degrees of freedom, the p-value obtained was .085, which is greater than the significance level of .05 for this study. As a result, the null hypothesis was not rejected, suggesting that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of lecturers and students regarding their perception of virtual learning practices on instructional delivery of students.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of lecturers and students regarding the strategies employed by selected tertiary institutions in Enugu State.

Table 2: Summary of t-test Analysis on the Mean ratings of lecturers and students on their perception of the strategies adopted by tertiary institutions

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	p-value	Decision
Lecturers	75	2.60	.88	521	.077	Do not Reject Ho ₄
Students	448	2.56	.85			

The data presented in Table 9 indicates that at 521 degrees of freedom, the p-value obtained was .077, which is greater than the significance level of .05 for this study. As a result, the null hypothesis was not rejected, suggesting that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of lecturers and students regarding their perception on the strategies adopted by the tertiary institutions in Enugu State.

Summary of Findings

The following summary of findings;

1. There is no significant difference between lecturers' and students' mean ratings on the perception integration of virtual learning practices on instructional delivery of students in selected tertiary institutions'.
2. There is no significant difference between lecturers' and students' mean ratings on the strategies adopted by tertiary institutions in Enugu State for integrating virtual learning perception.

Conclusion

The study investigated perceptions of virtual learning at the tertiary level in Nigeria. The findings from the study showed that there is no significant difference between lecturers' and students' mean ratings on the perception of virtual learning practices on instructional delivery of students in selected tertiary institutions' and there is no significant difference between lecturers' and students' mean ratings on the strategies adopted by tertiary institutions in Enugu State for integrating virtual learning perception.

Recommendations

The researchers came up with the following recommendations based on the findings of the study.

1. Educational institutions offering online courses and programmes should organize seminars, webinars and conferences for their facilitators and students on online learning perception.
2. Nigeria Education Service, Ministry of Education and Non-Governmental Organizations interested in education should support students with tablets, android phones and computers to enable them participate effectively in online learning perception.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study makes vital contribution to existing body of knowledge in literature in many area. This contributes significantly to existing body of knowledge in literature, offering insights into tertiary student's perception towards online learning. Moreover, this also offers valuable insights for researchers, students, facilitators and

institutions offering online programmes. In addition, the study fills a research gap by specifically exploring tertiary students, both undergraduate and postgraduate student's perceptions towards online learning within higher educational institutions contribution to the limited body of knowledge on online learning in the Enugu State.

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