

Managing Faculty and Student's Perception of Emergency Covid-19 Pandemic Learning in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The Emergency remote teaching birthed by the Covid-19 pandemic situation, heralded an unprecedented school closure consequently widening already existing educational access gap. This turbulent situation represented a very difficult and traumatic time for both teachers, students and parents. This research is a Case Study on Delta State University, Agbor Education students in affiliation with College of Education, Agbor. Delta State Nigeria. The Sample population is one hundred and eighty-four (184), which comprised of thirty (30) management team members, one hundred and thirty-six (136) lecturers and eighteen (18) students used for a focus group discussion. The selection criteria for the sample population were both purposive and interpretative in design. The research examined and told the story of an Institution's emergency remote teaching experience during the covid -19 pandemic crisis. There was no policy guide/handbook to guide the process. Since the ERT terrain was novel, stakeholders were innovative and proactive to meet the demand of the strange times. The theory of constraint (TOC) was used as a guide to explain the constraints on ground and guide actions taken in the course of the research. High cost of procuring digital tools, electricity outages and poor internet connectivity were highlighted as constraining factors for institutions teaching online. It is recommended that an emergency educational response team with a special Trust fund be put in place in institutions to act in times of crisis.

Keywords: Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), pandemic learning, management, theory of constraint (TOC), Covid-19

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1. Introduction

The effect of COVID-19 pandemic, with the resultant lockdown and social distancing dampened and disrupted higher education globally. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization -UNESCO, (2020) revealed that 98.6% of learners worldwide representing 1.725 billion school aged pupils and students in about 200 countries were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this global crisis, it is feared that 11 million girls might not return to school due to pandemic in addition to the 130 million girls already out of school before the pandemic. (UNESCO, 2019). To ensure educational sustainability, the criticality of several institutions including Delta State University, Agbor Campus was aroused forcing her to migrate to emergency remote teaching based on Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust and Bond, (2020) concept which described Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) as a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances. The ERT according to Hodges et al, involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions for instruction for education that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face, blended or hybrid and that will return to that format once the emergency has abated. Many teachers in

higher institutions in Nigeria as well the institution where the researcher is employed were forced by this situation to migrate to emergency remote learning. Although they have reverted to face-to-face since emergency abated. Murgatroid, (2020) in Pokjrel and Chhetri (2021) study exposed the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on Teaching and learning that were similarly experienced in this study.

Aligning to these, Hardman et al (2022), reported on an institutional case study where a survey of 136 academics from a university in the Western Cape, South Africa was carried out to learn more about impacts of Covid-19 on their. Their findings indicate that the enforced lockdown due to Covid-19 and the subsequent move to online teaching has had a negative impact on academics' sense of well-being. However, the emergence of the caring relationships between colleagues is reported to be a positive outcome of the covid-19 enforced move to online teaching. Mehta, (2021) further emphasized that teachers' readiness to adopt online teaching amid Covid-19 lockdown and perceived stress, pain or panacea as a part of their pedagogy may act as a starting point for policy makers to design properly structured training programmes for teachers that minimise stress level with a social implication if properly managed will mitigate either loss of learning to a generation or a major chunk of stressed-out teaching population.

Faculty members migrated suddenly to emergency remote teaching with varying degrees of support from emergency support staff, available technology and technical efficiency. The resultant effects of education moving home, revealed the digital unpreparedness with 66% of the higher education sector in Nigeria solely depending on public cloud computing for minimal online learning and interactions. Mormah (2021). It was "different strokes for different folks" as many lecturers were at different levels of technological efficiency. Data gathered during the interactive/training session organized by the institution in May 2020 showed that about 70% needed support. However, the instinct for educational and job survival was paramount. The research seeks to explore the extent of level of preparedness of lecturers' and students to emergency remote teaching. This is with a view to identifying areas of challenge that could be improved upon for future emergency service delivery.

Although there have been studies on pandemic education in other contexts, no study to the researcher's knowledge has been conducted on similar topic.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

Educational planners and administrators has the utmost aim of effectively managing the processes of teaching and learning to eliminate hurdles, bottlenecks and improve academic performances. This study is hinged on the theory of constraint (TOC) propounded by Dr Eliyahu Goldratt (1984) and reviewed by Balderstone, & Mabin, (1998) which focuses on identifying the most important limiting factor that stands in the way of achieving the optimumization of goal of teaching and learning during the pandemic and then systematically improving that constraint until it is no longer the limiting factor. This theory is used in this study to identify some major constraints like :

- * the high cost setting up ICT infrastructure, the provision of Computers facilities/digital devices both for institutions and individuals,
- * Irregular power supply,
- * internet connectivity,
- * lack ICT/technical skill for integrating and launching online teaching/learning and interaction were gradually minimized through training ,improvisation and, in some

cases, completely eliminated through the use of the set tools which includes the five focusing steps (a methodology for identifying and eliminating constraint) .To this end, a focus group discussion was carried out to identify and verify the existing and imagined constraints which are the limiting factors to the emergency remote teaching and learning.

- * The thinking process (tools for analyzing and resolving problems) With this model, constraints in the accessibility of digital tools and the learning process were identified, analyzed and resolved.
- * Throughput accounting (a method for measuring performance and guiding management decision). The results or level of achievement obtained is weighed and utilized to guide management and government decisions.

1.2. Design of Study

This study adopted stratified random sample technique in selecting students to participate in focus group discussion. The researcher designed a structured list of questions to guide the discussions. A qualitative research survey design was used to elicit information from students during the focus group discussion and describe the context in which the research was conducted. The discussions and experiences provided a qualitative view and analysis for the studies. Focus group participants were randomly selected from different strata/levels of both male and female students in degree and NCE programmes. The students were approached through their course Representatives through telephone calls and WhatsApp group chats. The design is also a case study design too. There is an already existing established teacher and student relationship between the researcher and the participants.

2. Methodology

The qualitative research approach methodology was used by the researcher in this study. The qualitative method is pragmatic enough to serve the emergency purpose of migrating the teaching and learning from the traditional face-to-face to emergency remote teaching which is sometimes inchangeably used as online learning. Relevant literatures were explored, webinars and virtual conferences attended throughout the pandemic to learn, find new ideas and suitable method to manage and maneuver to emergency remote teaching. Further data obtained from the interactive sessions, interviews and lecturer observation during the training process, the focus group discussion with students in May 2020 and June 2020 and the first part of 2021. Responses and observations were qualitatively analyzed. A Case Study of College of Education DELSU degree students , Agbor campus and College of Education NCE Students. Student focus group discussion covered discussions on the experiences gained and challenges faced during the pandemic emergency remote teaching and learning. The interviewer and facilitator is a lecturer/the author who also part of remote teaching and learning experience of the institution. Phases from the institution's objective, training/interactive sessions, teachers', students' responses to the emergency remote teaching are presented and qualitatively discussed below:

Students' expression of their challenges and pains during the pandemic teaching and learning periods during focus discussion are revealed in the following statement:

- i. The challenge of limited infrastructures and ICT devices to use for teaching and learning was scarce and limited to extent that some were not able to receive lectures nor communicate with their fellow students
- ii. There was poor and most times no internet connectivity both at school and home to use/ access to learning
- iii. The high cost of internet service was an hindrance to teaching and learning
- iv. The apprehension of change and online teaching as a new normal was there
- v. Some student expressed their reluctance, lack willingness and cooperation to accept the new normal
- vi. They also felt that online learning was too expensive and time consuming.

Table 1

Tabular Analysis and findings of the focus group discussion

S/N	Focus group qualitative research questions	Students' responses/Answers
1.	What were the devices you used during the Pandemic for teaching and learning?	Students used the android phones majorly and the laptops for a few. Some even had to borrow/lend mobile phones to use from relations and friends
2.	What major Apps did you use during the pandemic teaching and learning.	The WhatsApp and Zoom Apps were most popular.
3.	What strategies did you employ during the pandemic/ remote teaching and learning period to help get the best out of the situation?	i. I used my mobile phone since I didn't have a laptop. ii. Many used the social media tools to learn. "I had to wait for Aunty to be around to lend me her mobile phone before I could learn. Tracking the internet next work signal was an issue for me" Osareme For Samuel "I had to go out to look for electricity power supply to charge my learning devices" While some others have to learn in clusters with friends and colleagues who had a learning device. Another student said he coped by switching Sim-cards in other to track network signals to facilitate his learning, while others change spots until they are able to locate better internet network signal.
4.	Is there any benefit of the remote pandemic teaching and learning?	Yes, there were benefit because "during the pandemic, I became more skillful in the use and knowledge of the WhatsApp and zoom." "Before the pandemic, I have never heard of the zoom App, but learnt about it as well as to how to use it."

2.1. Purpose of the Study

The research seeks to explore the extent of level of preparedness of lecturers' and students to emergency remote teaching. This is with a view to identifying areas of challenge that could be improved upon for future emergency service delivery.

Although there have been studies on pandemic education in other contexts, no study to the researcher's knowledge has been conducted on similar topic.

2.2. Challenges of Teaching During the Pandemic

During the pandemic and subsequent training/ interactive sessions, it was evident that both the institution, and lecturers were apprehensive towards emergency remote teaching and experienced varied degrees of challenges on individual and institutional levels. Some of the challenges experienced included the limited/ no infrastructure/devices to use; Poor/no internet connectivity both at school and home to use; the high cost of internet service ; the apprehension of change and online teaching as a new normal; Remote assessment of students almost an impossible task; Complaint of learners' unwillingness and lack of cooperation to learn; Online teaching too expensive and time consuming.

2.3. Students' Responses to the Challenges

The student responded to covid-19 pandemic learning challenges in various ways and degree because they were students at varying academic, social- economic and psychological levels.

Many students, about 60% had no laptops nor desktops to use at home. While a large number of about 80% had android/smart phones. About 40% of students were geographically located in areas where there were no telecommunication networks. There was general poor internet connectivity in most areas during the pandemic teaching and learning period. Some students who do have the necessary digital devices for learning were counseled to form clusters with friends observing covid-19 protocol to utilize available digital tools (Android phones or laptops) to learn. The cost of internet connectivity and other learning cost were relatively high and the responsibilities the these cost were students and their parents.

2.4. School Response to Maneuvering and Managing the Teaching and Learning Pandemic Crisis

Different strategies were employed in managing the teaching/learning crisis. A school community-based approach was used at the institution where the researcher is employed to investigate the learning crisis. Faculty training/development process were initiated as an emergency response to teaching during the pandemic that would ultimately provide a resemblance of the face-to face mode. The institution was able to manage and maneuver this pandemic learning crisis in phases.

Phase 1

- **Consultation and Dialogue**

There were series of consultations within the strata of leadership and staff of the institution on possible ways to move forward.

Phase 2

- **Training of Management Staff and Board of Studies Members**

Academic board meeting was conveyed. Training sessions were organized in phases for Management Staff, board members, Registrars and deputy registrars.

Phase 3

- **Training of Lecturers, Faculty by Faculty, Department by Department**

Academic and non academic staff was trained in batches for convenience of social distancing to ensure minimal technical skill for emergency use are acquired during this time.

Phase 4

- **Scheduling of Time-Table for Online Teaching**

A Special Time-table with flexible times was prepared by the Time-table committee in collaboration with the e-learning committee to ensure smooth operation and prevention lecture clashes.

Phase 5

- **Whatsapp Group Creation in Clusters and Scheduling of Zoom Cloud Meetings**

WhatsApp groups for both students were created in classes and departments by the teachers and course reps. Meetings were scheduled. WhatsApp usage for conducting classes was most efficient and convenient in the current study.

Phase 6

- **Practical Implement/Launching of Teaching Online**

A Test run was done for teachers and as well as course Reps and selected students to enable smooth take-off. Assessment of the take-off was made by interviewing the students as well as the teachers and amendments made.

Phase 7

- **Assessment and Evaluation of Teachers' Online Teaching Activities**

A monitoring committee was set up to monitor and evaluate teachers and students' execution, compliance level and involvement in the online teaching as well as provide support.

Phase 8

- **Enforcement of Compliance Rules**

Rules to both staff and students for easy compliance were spelt. Sanctions and penalties for non – compliance and defaults were also made known to all.

2.5. Barriers and Lessons Learned in the Emergency Pandemic Learning in Nigeria

During the course of this study, and experiences gained from the covid-19 pandemic learning, the barriers to effective remote teaching and learning in institution of study were revealed and several lessons were learned as well. Particularly, this study revealed the barriers faced by teachers and students in their effort to ERT in Nigeria during the pandemic as:

(1) inability to maneuver infrastructural deficiency, low tech skills, poor/no internet access, epileptic power supply, and other logistic issues have proved to be a serious bane in wheel of technological success in pandemic learning in Nigeria. (2) Low students' participation due to lack of access to technological device (3) internet connectivity also hindered the teaching and learning during the pandemic.

Many lessons were learned in the course of teaching and learning during the pandemic which include the following:

(1) The wide digital gap among students, teachers and education stakeholders in education were revealed. (2) That collaboration and community team building is a necessary tool for overcoming the digital divide in education. (3) That management of institutions should be proactive in dealing with unexpected changes in learning situations. (4) That the physical computer laboratories are not always necessary (5) that human capacity development should never be neglected. (6) That students are willingly to learn if conducive learning conditions

are provided. (7) That individual efforts are needed to make maneuvering emergency pandemic learning in Nigeria work. (8) That institutions need to leverage on the free cloud computing of Microsoft and Google etc for their computing need.

3. Conclusion/ Recommendations

Conclusively, based on the experiences gained and lessons learned in this study's during the Emergency Remote Teaching, it is absolutely clear that the institution leadership, lecturer, non-teaching as well as students were caught unaware by the pandemic crisis as is the case in institutions across the globe and hence their level of unpreparedness to brace up with the covid-19 pandemic emergency remote teaching and learning was not adequate.

As a result of the foregoing experiences from the emergency remote teaching and learning during the period of the covid-19 pandemic uncertainties, the following recommendations have been made:

(i) It is recommended that there should be a de-emphasis on provision of infrastructural physical facilities of Computer laboratories and gigantic building where there were neither electricity power supply nor internet access to utilize the few digital tool in them.

(ii) That government, Institutions and well-meaning individuals should be encouraged to invest in the development of human resource, through training and retraining of both staff and students on digital skills acquisition.

(iii) Owing to the fact that most facilities were not in use during coronavirus pandemic lockdown and the fast rate of technological expansion, It is recommended that more emphasis be put on provision of emergency educational response team and Trust fund were institutions can fall back to in times of crisis.

(iv) The area of cloud computing for the Nigerian Education system should be looked into to increase internet access and reduce connectivity cost.

(v) The thinking process (tools for analyzing and resolving problems) With this model, constraints in the accessibility of digital tools and the learning process that were identified, analyzed and will be resolved.

(vi) It is further recommended that a method for measuring performance to guide management decision should be put in place. The results or level of achievement obtained should be weighed and utilized to further guide management and government decisions.

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