

Implementation of Blended Learning for Effective Instructional Delivery in Higher Institutions in Socio-Political Uncertainty in Anambra State, Nigeria

By

Chinyere Celina Okoye

cce.okoye@unizik.edu.ng, 08063689971

Victoria Chidiebele Udenwa, Ph.D

vc.udenwa@unizik.edu.ng, 08033072125

Obiagel Ifeoma Ikwuka, Ph.D

oi.ikwuka@unizik.edu.ng, 08035954383

Lucky Onyeisi Ogben

luckyogben2017@gmail.com, 090349707404

Abstract

Socio-political uncertainty is the issue which threatens the free flow of academic activities and other activities of the state and the country at large. These uncertainties which range from poverty, killings, kidnappings, unknown gunmen issues, and Mondays' sit-at-home among others are the issues observed by the researchers as disrupting the normal and daily activities of schools. This disruption makes many schools not being able to meet up with the teaching and learning activities of the school. Hence, this study investigated the implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery during the period of socio-political uncertainty. Descriptive survey research design was adopted and two research questions utilized. The sample size for the study comprised 108 lecturers randomly selected from two out of four higher institutions in the study area using two-stage sampling procedures of purposive and simple random sampling. A-16 item questionnaire validated by three experts, which was tested using Cronbach Alpha and yielded reliability coefficients of 0.75 and 0.82 respectively for the two clusters was used for the study. Data collected were analyzed using mean. The findings of the study revealed that there are means of implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery during the period of socio-political uncertainty so as to maintain the free flow of instructional process. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that higher institution lecturers should as a matter of importance acquire the necessary skills needed towards the implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery during the period of uncertainties.

Keywords: *Blended learning, instructional delivery, implementation, socio-political, uncertainty.*

Introduction

Socio-political uncertainty is the canker worm that is eating deep into the fabric of different developing countries of the world today including Nigeria. This has hampered the rate of their growth and development despite the huge human and material resources in the country. According to Acemoglu and Robinson in Qualy (2021), socio-political uncertainty refers to troubles and crises at a social level, demonstrations, terrorism, genocide, destruction of goods and economic infrastructures, reduction of production, assassinations, civil war and rebellion among others. In a nutshell, socio-political uncertainty is the different social and political vices that disrupt the economic growth and development of any nation as well as the peaceful co-existence of its citizenry. As different countries of the world are experiencing certain challenges peculiar to their territories, Nigeria too is facing socio-political challenges peculiar to her environment. These socio-political challenges according to Obamuyi and Fapetu (2016) have been the major challenges swinging the country with political and economic instability due to bad governance resulting from different kinds of insecurity at higher levels within the country such as kidnapping and killings, cult war, armed robbery activities, unknown gunmen issues, sit-at-home enforcement etc. In Nigeria, some geo-political zones of the federation including the Eastern zones have their own peculiar socio-political instability.

In the Eastern part of the country especially in Anambra State, people are experiencing different security challenges such as kidnapping, abduction, assassination and killing of different magnitude, cult war, looting and destruction of private and government properties, unknown gunmen issues and enforcement of Mondays' sit-at-home among others. All these and many more are seriously affecting not only the peace and tranquility of the State but also hampering the growth and development of different sectors of activity in the State. One of the sectors that is seriously affected is the education system due to its mode of instructional delivery.

The mode of instructional delivery in Nigerian schools is mainly through face-to-face or in-person learning approach. Today, this method of education delivery is no longer safe for both teachers and students due to incessant security challenges which has become the order of the day in the State and the country at large. People are being kidnapped, assassinated and killed on daily basis. The sit-at-home enforcement has gone beyond being Mondays' affair in some parts of the State; hence, movement starts at mid-day. Consequent upon this, people do not go for their normal businesses nor attend to their needs outside their homes in the morning hours except in the noon time, some do not even go out at all due to the fear of being harmed by the miscreants or hoodlums. Students especially the higher institution students are also affected due to their vulnerability to the ugly situation and this may have a significant effect on the functioning of school activities. students' lives and the society in which they live. In the view of this recent happenings in the State, it is obvious that the various distractions could have had negative implications on the social life of the people and by extension affect the instructional process of higher institution students.

Higher institution students are both undergraduate and post-graduate students in post higher secondary institutions of learning such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and so on who come from different backgrounds and places. Some are successful business men and women, prominent people in the society, artisans, and workers in different sectors of activity who wish to upgrade their educational level. This notwithstanding, exposing them to commuting to class

regularly can be risky especially in the period of socio-political uncertainty. Also, allowing them to be idle at home in the morning, and attend school in the noon time as the situation of the State demands is dangerous. It cannot only disrupt the free flow of schools' academic calendar which will lead to jam-packing of academic activities which would be a significant threat to the quality of education in the post socio-political era.

Moreover, the usual mode of instructional delivery is through face to face interaction in the classroom. This according to Bojovic, Bojovic, Vujosevic and Suh (2020) does not enable the continuity of educational process in the period of crisis, disaster, emergency or uncertainty. Therefore, to address the issue of undergraduate students not being able to go to school at the proper time and day due to fear; necessitates the need for higher institutions to make conscientious and holistic effort towards adopting the approach that involve the use of technology; but does not allow total extinction of face-to-face classroom instruction. Research evidence, by Ikwuka, Okoye, Olanikawu, Udenwa, Okoye and Ikwuka (2021) on emergency remote teaching (ERT) during COVID-19 pandemic revealed that university students were not fully satisfied with online learning due to insufficient learning activities. Hence, the need to adopt blended learning approach to bridge the gap of inadequacy of learning activities and boredom among isolated learners associated with online learning alone.

Blended learning incorporates the terms such as online learning, mobile learning, and virtual learning. It combines face-to-face teacher-student interactions with online learning resources in carrying out overall instructional delivery process for students. In corroboration, Rao and Sekhar (2019) and Grahman in Magasu, Lubungu, Mulima, Kamboni, Sakala and Kapanda (2022) defined blended learning as a learning style that combines face-to-face instruction with a computer mediated instruction learning to leverage learning to students. Blended learning indeed enabled learning beyond the classroom through technology. It allows students to do personalised learning outside the classroom with accessibility to more online materials through the use of computer, mobile phone, etc and to collaborate with their peers and teacher in the real time either online or physical (face-to-face).

The use of online learning involves delivering of lesson to students through pre-recorded videos by the teacher, e-articles, e-book, e-journal and so on; while face-to-face learning involves delivering of lesson to students in real time at the scheduled time for the lesson either in an online or in the physical classroom environments. For scholars like Zainuddin and Keumala (2018) and Usmani (2021), blended learning allows students engagement in synchronous learning, that is having live lectures, real-time interactions and receiving of instant feedback through electronic media; and asynchronous learning which involves accessing lesson content that is made available by the teacher at their convenience. With blended learning, students can choose their convenient mode of learning especially during the period of socio-political uncertainty. Buck, Tyrrell, Bock and Blend (2022) emphasized that during the pandemic era, blended learning was favourable for students as they no longer go to the university to receive instruction, and this did not affect their learning process. This indicates that there are a lot of benefits accruing from blended mode of learning.

The benefits of blended learning cannot be overemphasized. It makes instructional delivery more convenient and accessible. Flexibility is another interesting aspect of blended learning as it enables both teachers and students to

choose the most suitable means for instructional delivery. Dhawan (2020) corroborated that online mode of learning is easily accessible and can even reach to rural and remote areas added that with blended mode of learning, students can construct knowledge and understanding by themselves and develop new skills in the process, which will lead to life-long learning. As the situation of the country continues to change, transformation towards the integration and use of online learning resources in today's education becomes imperative, especially to take care of distance, location and physical exposure in the period of socio-political uncertainty.

Blended learning as a change in the instructional delivery should be adopted as the major mode of instructional delivery in higher institutions for continuity in education even in the period of uncertainty. Today, socio-political uncertainty has opened an opportunity for the long awaited mode of instructional delivery transformation. Suffice it to say, integration and adoption of technology in form of blended learning in the learning process can make teaching and learning environment more convenient, innovative, accessible and flexible. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of blended learning for instructional delivery and students' participation during the period of socio-political uncertainty may largely depend on its implementation process and the factors that can hinder it. Moreover, it was observed that due to the past experience of COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the current political crisis across the country, some higher institutions employed the use of blended learning in order to keep education going and since then have not relented in the use of such for instructional delivery.

Higher institutions are located both in the urban and rural areas in Anambra State. Presumably, students who live in rural areas may be experiencing limited access to internet connectivity and electricity due to location. In support, Obiakor and Adeniran (2020) explained that students who live in rural areas experience limited access to internet connectivity, computers, and other devices for online learning as a result of location and socio-economic status which prevent them from actively participating in online learning. In line with this, Jena (2020) asserted that utilisation of blended learning and participation of higher institution students is affected by their accessibility to internet and availability of technological devices. Blended learning could as well meet not only the academic needs of the students, but also other growing challenges of the world. Consequent upon this, the use of blended learning is a sine qua non in meeting the academic needs of the students. In line with this, Fernandez, Ramesh and Manivannan (2022), Magasu et al. (2022) and Basilaia, Dgebuadze, Kantaria and Chokhonelidze (2020) found out that amidst crisis, implementation of blended learning reduces the burden of learning in a scheduled time and assists the students to learn through recorded videos, webinar, broadcast and online training courses irrespective of location once the facilities are available. This will help to make instructional delivery efficient and effective during the period of uncertainty provided that there is internet connectivity, facilities and steady supply of electricity.

As it stands, the issue of erratic power supply, internet connectivity, network issues, dearth of technological facilities, and lack of technical-know-how among others are some of the challenges associated with effective use of blended learning for instructional delivery in Nigeria. Alonta et al. (2022) asserted that despite higher institution lecturers' strategies for effective use of blended learning model, they still face some challenges such as lack of technical knowledge, poor internet facilities, epileptic power supply, and lack of interest and inefficient delivery of practical

courses. Notwithstanding, these challenges could be surmounted with adequate planning and arrangement. However, to successfully achieve the aim of uninterrupted learning process during the period of socio-political uncertainty, there is the need for the implementation of blended learning in higher institutions for effective instructional delivery. Based on this backdrop, the specific purpose of this study is to find out how blended learning is implemented in the higher institutions for effective instructional delivery in the period of socio-political uncertainty.

Research Questions

22. What are the means of implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery in the period of socio-political uncertainty?
23. What are the factors affecting implementation of blended learning in higher institutions for effective instructional delivery in the period of socio-political uncertainty?

Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted 1,956 lecturers in the five higher institutions in Anambra State. Out of this, a sample of 108 lecturers were drawn from two out of the five higher institutions using two stage sampling procedures of purposive and simple random sampling. The two out of the five higher institutions were purposively sampled using the criteria of those located in the areas mostly affected by socio-political uncertainty situation and those who are still implementing blended learning for instructional delivery in the post-Covid-19 era. Also, simple random sampling was used to select 54 lecturers each from the selected schools. Self-developed Questionnaire titled “Implementation of Blended Learning for Effective Instructional Delivery in Higher Institutions Questionnaire (IBLEIDHIQ)” was used to collect data. The instrument has two clusters, A and B. Each cluster contained 6 items used to answer the research questions on the 4-points rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA-4points), Agree (A-3points), Disagree (D-2points) and Strongly Disagree (SD-1point). The instrument was validated by three experts from the Department of Educational Foundations in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded the coefficients of 0.75 and 0.82 for clusters A and B respectively. Data were collected through online using Google forms and analyzed using mean. The cut-off point for accepting mean score was put at 2.50 with the decision rule that mean score of 2.50 and above was taken as Agreed, while the mean score below 2.50 was taken as Disagreed. The mean of means served as the point of final decision.

Results

Research Question I

What are the means for implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery in the period of socio-political uncertainty?

Table 1: Mean Rating of Respondents on the Means for Implementation of Blended Learning for Effective Instructional Delivery in the Period of Socio-Political Uncertainty

S/N	I do the following:	Mean	Remark
1.	Upload pre-recorded lesson contents to students through online platform	4.05	Agree
2.	Present lesson content synchronously (in the real-time scheduled for the lesson)	4.00	Agree
3.	Engage students in, in-class discussion	2.10	Disagree
4.	Give students written exercises during online learning	1.19	Disagree
5.	Use video conferencing for lectures	4.03	Agree
6.	Use online learning for class discussion	2.67	Agree
	Mean of Means	3.01	Agree

Data in Table 1 indicate that items 1, 2, 5 and 6 which have the mean scores of 4.05, 4.00, 4.03 and 2.67 respectively were above the cut-off mean score of 2.50. This showed that the respondents agreed that they do all those things mentioned in the listed items for implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery during the period of socio-political uncertainty. Items 3 and 4 have the mean scores of 2.10 and 1.19 respectively which are below the cut-off point. This showed that the respondents disagreed with the items. The mean of means of 3.01 indicated that there are means of implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery in the period of socio-political uncertainty.

Research Question 2

What are the factors affecting implementation of blended learning in higher institutions for effective instructional delivery?

Table 2: Mean Rating of Respondents on the Factors affecting Implementation of Blended Learning Approach in Higher Institutions for Effective Instructional Delivery

S/N	Factors affecting implementation of blended learning in Higher institutions for effective instructional delivery	Mean	Remark
1.	Erratic power supply	3.35	Agree
2.	Lack of technical-know-how	3.00	Agree
3.	Poor internet connectivity	2.60	Agree
4.	Network issues	4.05	Agree
5.	Poverty	4.16	Agree
6.	Lack of interest	2.56	Agree
	Weighted Mean	3.29	Agree

Data in Table 2 indicate that all the items have mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50, showing that the respondents agreed that all the items are factors affecting implementation of blended learning in higher institutions. The mean of means of 3.29 indicated that there are factors affecting implementation of blended learning in higher institutions for effective instructional delivery.

Discussion

There are means of implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery in the period of socio-political uncertainty

The findings of the study revealed that there are means of implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery in the period of socio-political uncertainty. This implies that if all these means of implementation of blended learning are employed for effective instructional delivery, the risk of exposing both the teachers and students to danger as a result of commuting to school every time for lectures even in the socio-political situation will be taken care of. This finding is in

tandem with the findings of Fernandez *et al.* (2022); Magasu *et al.* (2022) and Basilaia *et al.* (2020) who found out that amidst crisis, implementation of blended learning reduces the burden of learning in a scheduled time as it will assist the students to learn through recorded videos, webinar, broadcast and online training courses irrespective of location once the facilities are available, as well as helps in maintaining the free flow of instructional process.

Furthermore, implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery in the socio-political uncertainty situation through those means will help to reduce the possibility of jam-packing of academic activities in the post socio-political era as a result of disruption of school activities. This finding is in line with the findings of Buck, Tyrrell, Bock and Blend (2022) who found out that implementation of blended learning during the pandemic era was favourable for students as they no longer go to the university to receive instruction, and still their learning process was not affected.

There are factors affecting implementation of blended learning in higher institutions for effective instructional delivery

The findings of the study showed that there are factors affecting implementation of blended learning in higher institutions for effective instructional delivery. The factors include erratic power supply, lack of technical-know-how, poor internet connection, network issues, poverty and lack of interest. This finding is in line with the findings of Alonta et al (2022) who found out that poor internet facilities, epileptic power supply among others are factors affecting implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery in higher institutions.

On the other hand, from the findings of the study, it was observed that the factors are dependent on the location of the students. This finding is in line with the findings of Obiakor and Adeniran (2020) who revealed that students who live in rural areas are more likely to experience limited access to internet connectivity, computers, and other devices for online learning due to location and socio-economic status. Jena (2020) in her own view observed that utilisation of blended learning and participation of higher institution students is affected by their accessibility to internet and availability of technological devices.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there are means of implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery in the socio-political uncertainty. Also, there are factors affecting implementation of blended learning in higher institutions for effective instructional delivery in Anambra State.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

29. Higher institution lecturers should as a matter of importance acquire the necessary skills needed towards the implementation of blended learning for effective instructional process during the period of uncertainties in particular and for instructional delivery of other school learning activities in general.
30. Management and Administrators of higher institutions in Anambra State should adequately provide the necessary technological facilities and resources needed for implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery.

31. Workshops, seminars, conference and symposiums should be organized by the Administrators and Managements of higher institution for both lecturers and students on the implementation of blended learning for effective instructional delivery.

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