

An Enhanced Method of Teaching and Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Case of Pen Resource Academy Gombe

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Abstract

Many countries worldwide experienced the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic. Especially the closure of schools which necessitated the use of social media platforms in teaching and learning. This study adapted a questionnaire to collect information from 225 respondents to investigate the successes recorded in the use of the WhatsApp group created to serve as an alternative to physical teaching in Pen Resource Academy (PRA) Gombe. The study used percentage analysis and recorded 69.0% success and as well find out the challenges encountered to about 73.6% and 74.2% from the Teachers and students respectively. The study has highlighted some selected online platforms for teaching with an assessment level of familiarity of the students and teachers to those platforms ranging from 34.7% to 23.1% and 38.5 to 26.9% respectively. Therefore, if the challenges will be attended to, it will enhance teaching and learning in PRA Gombe during lock down.

Keywords: E-learning, PRA, COVID-19, Online platforms, lockdown.

Introduction

About 264 million children are out of school (United Nations, 2020) and with the effects of COVID-19 the number will definitely increase. In February 27, 2020, it was announced that an Italian citizen had tested positive to COVID-19 making it the first confirmed case in Nigeria. From that day, the fear of COVID-19 snowballed into a palpable fear (Doris & Okeoghene, 2021). Millions of Nigerians were scared to leave their homes which led to the first lockdown announced by President Muhammadu Buhari in Lagos, Ogun and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. This was followed by nationwide lockdown of all roads leading from one state to another and schools nationwide were all put on indefinite lockdown by the President (Ifijeh, 2020). In the same vein, it was on the 23rd March, 2020 that Gombe State was put under total lockdown in a statewide address by his Excellency Muhammad Inuwa Yahya, the Governor of Gombe State. During the address, the Governor directed all schools in the state to close effective from 24th March, 2020 until further notice, to help manage and reduce the spread of the corona virus (Premium Times, 2020). This lockdown came at the eve of the 2nd Term Examination of 2018/2019 academic session of secondary schools.

The decision arrived at globally is to shut down the educational institutes with the aim of maintaining social distance to curtail its spread (Mohammad, 2020). Therefore, it is quite impossible

to observe and continue with normal classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, for the fact that maintaining social distance has become necessary and of paramount importance (Mohammed, Nouha, & Tarik, 2021). This has made schools at all levels to exhaust all the avenues of teaching and learning and as a result, the communities were left with no any other option rather than to utilize the online platforms or social media to ensure physical safety to the learning community (Sumitra & Roshan, 2021). This is the time for all the stake holders in education to put heads together and devise some strategies by developing applications that are user friendly (FutureLearn, 2020) that will also keep the spirit of teaching and learning even with the pandemic (Lokanath, Tushar, & Abha, 2020). Online learning has been adopted in some institutes, however, most schools, colleges and universities are not equip with this type of approach (Mohammad, 2020). Thus, the pandemic has forced teachers and students to not only appreciate the online learning methods, but to embrace the technology as well (Lokanath, Tushar, & Abha, 2020). Though, some countries have converted to online teaching and learning completely (Petrie, 2020), because they have the modalities on ground, whereas some experienced a more devastating period in which Nigeria is not an exception because there is no any forecast in that regards. (Johannes, Daniela J., & Nina, 2020).

COVID-19, has created a paradigm shift on how education and other governmental functions are

been performed, from classes to zoom, from personal/real to virtual and from seminars to webinars (Lokanath, Tushar, & Abha, 2020). Despite a lot of damages caused by the pandemic in all ramifications (Palden, 2020), thus, it is a blessing in disguise. It has awakened almost all the sectors to identify all their potentialities and harness from the abundance resources available within human disposal (Murgatrotd, 2020). The transition to this new environment of education, learners especially children must be given a special social care to inculcate in them concentration and motivation (Ravichandran & Shah, 2020). However, the introduction and implementation of online platforms, are not intended in any way to replace the existing approach of teacher taught direct-interaction, but to complement the task especially at the time of disaster where physical interaction is a challenge (Maria, Antonio, Maria Concepcion, & Maria MEDINA, 2019). In addition, part of the disadvantages of using online platforms is that it will subject the children to become cyber addicted and as such, there is high chance of cyber risk that will venture into the educational system (Institute, 2019).

On the other hand, Distance Learning (DL) is an educational model which provides learning without limits of space or time, where the educational scenario assumes the existence of a geographic separation between teacher and students, and the use of technology becomes a tool for communication and broadcasting except in correspondence courses (Bruno & Rui, 2011). The advent of information and communication technology now allows for easy access to information in a convenient form. Social media and social network services such as Face book, Twitter, WhatsApp enable easier accessibility and retrieval of information from anywhere and at any time. (Doris & Okeoghene, 2021). Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have created new spaces in the construction of knowledge. Each day, more people are studying at home and, from there; they can access cyberspace training and DL (Valentina & Nelly, 2014). The time for learning is no longer confined to a certain place and period of time (Bruno & Rui, 2011). It is on this note, that the Management of Pen Resource Academy (PRA) Gombe introduced the use of WhatsApp platform at all levels from JSS 1 to SS 3 during the period of COVID-19. The framework was designed and managed by the ICT unit of the school. Therefore, the study aimed at familiarizing the students and Teachers of PRA with the successes recorded in enhancing and reinforcing the teaching and

learning process from using the WhatsApp platforms during the pandemic.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to ascertain the successes recorded from using the WhatsApp. platform by both students and teachers of PRA during the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, the study also investigated the challenges encountered in using the platform and finally, highlighted other online platforms that will be incorporated into the teaching and learning process of PRA.

Literature Review

Lokanath, Tushar, & Abha, (2020), presented a study that demonstrated various online teaching and learning styles that were implemented by the Mizoram University in India during COVID-19 pandemic. The research aimed at creating virtual classes and other pivotal online tools that helps in transforming formal education into online education, it has also highlighted other opportunities to be employed and utilized in case of future calamities. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to ascertain the perceptions of both teachers and students in accepting online teaching and learning modes.

Mohammad (2020) also presented a study on challenges of e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced by EFL learners. The study determined the challenges faced by English language learners of Alula, Taibah University of Saudi Arabia during the adoption of online learning in the second semester of 2019/2020 academic session. The study evaluated the new experience and investigated the possibilities of implementing other virtual methods of teaching.

Doris & Okeoghene, (2021) also presented a research that investigated the online platforms used in Teaching and Learning during the lockdown period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Survey method was adopted and data was collected from students of 200 level of Library and Information Science of Delta State University. A total of 187 students participated in the study through online questionnaire that was designed on survey monkey. Three lecturers were also engaged through a WhatsApp chat. Findings from the research, revealed that WhatsApp and telegram are the only available platforms used by the LIS educators during the lockdown. Availability of lecturers and avenue to save lectures materials, were some of the benefits derived from online platforms. While, not having a

smart phone, amount used for subscription were some of the challenges faced by the students. The study also highlighted how Teacher/Student relationship could be improved and as well make the teaching and learning process more interactive, collaborative and participatory for all students.

Methods

Quantitative research technique was adopted, where data was collected through responses obtained from the students of SSS I to SSS III using a questionnaire in a convenience sampling technique, this has given room to select the students according to their Arm (Science, Arts and Commercial) classes. Although all, the students from JSS I to SSS III participated in using the WhatsApp platform, but the reason for selecting the senior classes is because most of the students at this level own smart phones.

Population and Sample

Sixty (60) students were sampled out each from the 3 levels making a total of 180 students but with a response of 90%. Therefore, (58 Science students, 60 Arts students and 44 Commercial students), making a total of 162 students participated in the study. Thus, 26

Teachers and 37 parents also participated in filling out responses peculiar to their parts.

Instrument for Data Collection

The questionnaire titled: Questionnaire on the use of WhatsApp during lock down, contains 22 multiple questions (yes/no, multiple choice, and open-ended questions), which covered the study's objectives. It consists different parts; the first part is about students', Teachers' and parents' readiness in the WhatsApp platform as a means of impacting knowledge during the pandemic, the second part includes a set of questions about the challenges faced by both Teachers and Students in the course of using the platform. While the third part is the extent to which the Teachers and Students have attained in getting familiar with some selected online platforms. The questionnaire was administered to all Form Masters for onward transmission to their respective students and their parents after presenting a proposal on the benefits that may be derived from the study to the management of the school. A time frame of one week was given to the respondents

Results

Table 1a: Acceptability of the Platform

SNO	Parameters of Acceptance	Science Students (N =58)	Arts Students (N= 60)	Commercial Students (N= 44)	Teachers (N= 26)	Parents (N= 37)
1	Availability of Materials	72.4%	75.0%	66.0%	77.0%	54.1%
2	Freedom of Questions/Answers	86.2%	91.7%	70.0%	80.8%	43.2%
3	Conduciveness of Teaching/Learning	56.9%	66.7%	60.0%	77.0%	54.1%
4	Prevention from CIVID-19	88.0%	88.3%	90.0%	92.3%	83.8%
5	Serve as an Alternative	51.7%	60.0%	50.1%	80.8%	48.6%
6	Have Access to the Internet	96.6%	86.7%	91.0%	96.2%	67.6%
7	Have Used Other Online Platforms	53.4%	48.3%	44.0%	77.0%	40.5%
8	Interference and Home Disturbance	48.3%	53.3%	56.0%	61.5%	70.3%
	Total Success	69.2%	71.3%	65.9%	80.3%	57.8%

It could also be deduced from Table 1a the Average responses of the three Arms of students in Table 1b:

SN	Parameters of Acceptance	Average Response of Students	Response of Teachers	Parents	Average Responses
1	Availability of Materials	71.1%	77.0%	54.1%	67.4%
2	Freedom of Questions/Answers	82.6%	80.8%	43.2%	68.9%
3	Conduciveness of Teaching/Learning	61.2%	77.0%	54.1%	64.1%
4	Prevention from COVID – 19	88.8%	92.3%	83.8%	88.3%
5	Serve as a Alternative	53.9%	80.8%	48.6%	61.1%
6	Have Access to the Internet	91.4%	96.2%	67.6%	85.1%

7	Have used other online platforms	48.6%	77.0%	40.5%	55.4%
8	Interference & Home Disturbance	52.5%	61.5%	70.3%	61.4%
	Average Success Recorded	68.7%	80.3%	57.8%	69.0%

Table 1a and 1b depict the details of successes and acceptability of the platform, it shows that 69.0% of the respondents appreciated and agreed that using the Watts-App as an alternative to teaching and learning during the lockdown is a great achievement and has recorded remarkable success. In addition, 88.3% of the respondents have agreed that using the platform could help in preventing the spread of the virus. It could be

seen that the Teachers appreciated the platform most (80.3%), followed by the students (68.7%) while the parents appreciated the platform with (57.8%). It has been deduced from the results that the Art students accepted the platform with (71.3%) success rate, followed by science students with (69.2%) success rate, then Commercial students with (65.9%) success rate.

Table 2: Responses of Challenges Encountered:

SN O	Nature of Challenges	Science Student (N =58)	Arts Student (N= 60)	Commercial Students (N= 44)	Average Responses of Students	Teachers (N =26)
1	Interruption of Power Supply	70.7%	81.7%	91.0%	81.1%	84.6%
2	Cost of Data Subscription	84.5%	91.7%	93.2%	90.0%	76.9%
3	Familiarity with WhatsApp	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
4	Not Having Smart Phone	20.7%	20.0%	18.2%	19.6%	7.7%
5	Too Much Incoming Messages	81.0%	71.7%	75.0%	76.0%	77.0%
6	Stressing One's Eyes	79.3%	80.0%	88.6%	82.6%	88.5%
7	Fear of Risk of Radiation	86.2%	61.7%	68.2%	70.8%	80.8%
8	Interference and home Disturbance	67.2%	68.3%	84.1%	73.2%	73.1%
	% of Challenges Encountered				74.2%	73.6%

From Table 2, it could be understood that 100% of Teachers and Students are familiar with Watts-App from which the online platform was implemented on, it has also shown the insignificant number of both the Teachers (7.7%) and Students (19.6%) who do not

have smart phone. However, both Teachers and Students in the process of using the platform encountered challenges for Teaching and Learning, recording 73.6% and 74.2% respectively.

Table 3: Familiarity of Some Selected Online Teaching Platforms

SN O	Parameters of Acceptance	Science Students (N =58) %	Arts (N= 60) %	Commercial Students (N= 44) %	Average Student Response	Teachers (N= 26) %
1	Can Teach/Learn Through YouTube	60.3	70.0	50.0	60.1	46.2
2	Preferred Telegram as an Alternative to WhatsApp	45.0	60.0	50.0	51.7	46.2
3	Used emails in Educational Pursuit	93.1	75.0	68.2	78.8	92.3
4	Know About Google Class Room Platform	39.7	35.0	29.5	34.7	38.5
5	Know About Class Time online platform	36.2	33.3	29.5	33.6	34.6
6	Know About Class Dogo online platform	29.3	25.0	25.0	26.4	30.8
7	Know About Class Size online platform	29.3	21.7	18.2	23.1	26.9

From Table 3, it is understood that a considerable percentage of both Teachers (92.3%) and Students (78.8%) use emails in the process of their academic

pursuit. The result also showed that more than half of the students (51.7%) preferred to receive lectures through Telegram than Watts-App, while only 46.2%

of Teachers preferred Telegram in their Teaching process than Watts-App. The result further revealed that, most of the online platforms are not known by both the Teachers (38.5%) and Students (34.7%).

Discussion

This paper investigated the successes recorded from using the WhatsApp platform by students and Teachers of PRA during the COVID-19 lockdown as a means of impacting knowledge as an alternative rather than shutting the academic process entirely.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a complete paradigm shift in the educational systems of the whole world, disrupting almost 1.6 billion students in more than 200 countries. Shutting down of schools, institutions and other learning environment have affected more than 94% of the world's student population (Sumitra & Roshan, 2021). As a result, it has necessitated many researchers to devise different methodologies in their teaching and learning process. Several schools, colleges and universities have discontinued physical teachings. Therefore, PRA Gombe introduced the use of Watts-App Group for all the classes to help in teaching and learning even during the lockdown. It is on this note that the study investigated the achievements gained, recording 69.0% of success and acceptability by the respondents from using the platform. This result is similar to the work of Lokanath, Tushar, & Abha, (2020).

It was found out that the challenges encountered to about 73.6% and 74.2% from the Teachers and students respectively, the result obtained is in conformity with the findings of Mohammad, (2020).

The study lastly enumerated some selected online platforms for teaching and learning with an assessment of the level of familiarity of the respondents to those platforms. Results obtained is line with that of Doris & Okeoghene, (2021).

Conclusion

Many educational institutions have created various online infrastructures. Some of which are even free, the most familiar platform is the WhatsApp application. However, it is unsuitable since it lacks monitoring and evaluation capabilities making it impossible for the teachers to determine whether or not the students have grasped the lessons taught. The school need to enhance its ICT unit and make it mandatory for some of the courses to be taught and assess the students online. This will enable both the

teachers and students to exhaust the abundance resources and have series of alternatives in case of unforeseen circumstances that may necessitate lockdowns. Despite the challenges encountered in using the application, the study has also enumerated some selected online platforms for teaching and learning with an assessment of the level of familiarity of the respondents to those platforms. Therefore, if the challenges encountered would be reduced, the selected online platforms may be implemented and incorporated into the School Academic Plan which may in turn give room to mount and create virtual classes if need arises.

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