



EMBRACING REMOTE LEARNING AS AN UNSWERVING MODE OF INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY FOR STUDENTS IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS: BENEFITS, CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

This study sought to examine embracing remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions: benefits, challenges and way forward. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The sample for this study consisted of 300 respondents made up of 200 students and 100 academic staff randomly selected from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument for data collection was researchers developed questionnaires. The research questions were answered using mean scores and standard deviation, while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. The findings of this study showed that the benefits of remote learning are: accessibility, time flexibility, learn at own pace, promotes interaction, improve technical skills, cost-effective, personalized learning experience among others. The findings of this study revealed that the challenges of remote learning are: lack of communication, not receiving timely feedback, technical difficulties, inadequate pedagogical skills of online lecturers, cheating, impersonation and plagiarism cannot be restricted. The findings of this study also unveiled that the way forward include: use of suitable online platform, giving adequate feedback, self-discipline, good time management, self-motivation, reliable internet connections, applying synchronous and asynchronous tools. The paper recommends that the management of higher institutions should as a matter of urgency, invest in remote learning by way of upgrading their ICT architecture and organizing more training on remote learning content development. Government should undertake massive in-service training and retraining on remote learning through workshops, conferences, seminars and symposia.

Keywords: remote learning, instructional delivery, internet, online courses, learning context.

Introduction

Remote learning relied on correspondence courses, where materials were mailed back and forth between instructors and students in the past. This method allowed students to learn at their own pace, but it lacked the immediacy and interactivity of traditional classrooms. With the advent of the internet, however, a new era of remote learning began, offering students seamless access to educational resources from all corners of the globe. Online platforms have transformed the mode of instructional delivery. Students can now participate in live virtual lectures, engage in discussions with classmates through online forums, and submit assignments electronically. Gilbert (2015) noted that remote learning involves a wide range of educational experiences that take place outside the traditional classroom. It includes both synchronous activities, where students and educators interact in real-time, and asynchronous activities, where learning materials are accessed at the student's convenience. This flexibility grants students the freedom to learn at their own pace.



Remote learning is a form of pedagogy delivered using digital technology. Moore (2015) refers to remote learning as any educational procedure in which the teacher and the student are separated geographically. The acquisition of information is through methods other than the traditional ways of teaching and learning. The learning materials are sent through mail including exercises and assignments which are then expected to be accomplished by students at a preferred time. Clark and Mayer (2016) defined remote learning as teaching and learning activities delivered using digital devices with the objective of achieving outcome-based learning. Mhlanga and Moloi (2020) also defined remote learning as all the teaching and learning activities that are separated by distance and time and, thus, cannot have a contact session. The aforementioned scholars unanimously agree that remote learning involves the use of platforms such as Microsoft teams, blackboard, emails, zoom, Moodle and WhatsApp. These platforms give both the facilitator and learners an opportunity to take part in teaching and learning whilst in the comfort of their homes. Remote learning has a lot of benefits that make it a compelling choice for learners of all ages and backgrounds. talespin.com (2024) disclosed that remote learning is flexible and convenient. It enables students to access course materials and lectures at their own pace. Remote learning allows for a more personalized learning experience. Remote learning can be a cost-effective alternative to traditional education. Students save money on expenses such as commuting, accommodation, and textbooks. Radu, Radu and Croitoru (2015) stated that remote learning allows enhanced communication between students and instructors. The integration and use of remote learning offers disabled people an opportunity for advancing their education from any location. onlinemba.wsu.edu (2024) depicted that remote learning position students for career advancement even while they are working, between jobs, or taking time to raise a family. It also helps students to improve their technical skills. Furthermore, remote learning fosters a sense of independence and self-discipline. Without the constraints of a physical classroom and set schedules, students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning voyage.

Despite the benefits of remote learning, students encounter several challenges which ultimately lead towards either limited or negative outcomes. Arkorful and Abaidoo (2015) outlined that remote learning, in certain cases is held through remoteness and contemplation resulting in lack of student's interaction. In comparison with the contemporary mode of education, remote learning might result in being less effective due to the absence of face-to-face encounter with instructions or teachers. Since in remote learning method, assessments are generally held online which reduces the possibility of restricting illegitimate activities such as; cheating, impersonation and plagiarism. Islam, Beer and Slack (2015) stated that the absence of essential personal interactions is the most noticeable drawback of remote learning, not only among colleague learners, but also between instructors and learners. Brophy (2015) noted that one of the challenges in remote learning is lack of students' motivation towards online teaching and learning. Sulaiman (2014) stated that educators' lack the relevant skills to carry out online remote teaching and learning. Abd Aziz (2020) noted remote learning is impeded by inadequate infrastructure such as unstable internet connection and poor electronics devices.

While remote learning offers numerous benefits, it comes with its fair share of challenges. However, with the right strategies, these hurdles can be overcome. Rahman (2020) stated that there are a few strategies that can be implemented in online remote teaching and learning such as the use of suitable online platform, applying synchronous and asynchronous tools as well as giving feedback to increase students' motivation and participation. thinkific.com (2024) stated that the solution to remote learning challenges are: practicing self-discipline by creating an



online learning schedule, take study breaks to avoid burnout and lower screen-time levels and dedicate a quiet study space with no distractions and become familiar with online support systems in place. According to talespin.com (2024), managing time effectively is crucial for remote learners. Access to a reliable internet connection is essential for successful remote learning. Also, remote learning requires self-motivation, as learners may not have the same level of external accountability as in a traditional classroom with regards to instructional delivery.

Instructional delivery is a method, strategy or even a technique that a teacher employs to deliver his/her subject matter of a lesson to the students. Etuk & Umoh (2013) perceive instructional delivery as the knowledge of teaching techniques and their application for learning to take place in such a flexible manner that would not distort the original intent of the teacher for being in the classroom. Nwafor (2017) defined instructional delivery as a representation of a pattern in which a lesson is to be presented. According to Battioala (2014), instructional delivery refers to the interaction among the students, the teacher, the content, the knowledge, skills, dispositions students will need for learning and collaborating with others. Mezieobi (2009) noted that instructional delivery has been seen as the process showing every activity the teacher and the learner does in a classroom setting. So, every effort that the teacher makes in order to have a fruitful time with the students by exposing the contents, employing methods, strategies, the students' interaction with the environment, resources available and even the evaluation process sums up to mean instructional delivery. When a teacher consciously utilizes his training, knowledge, skills and value and relays it in order to change the behavioral position of the learner, the teacher is carrying out instructional delivery.

The mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions in Nigeria is mainly traditional methods, such as lectures and textbooks, which provide a structured and organized approach to learning. These methods also allow for the transmission of knowledge from the lecturer to the students, which can be beneficial in certain courses. However, the shortcoming of traditional methods is that they may not effectively develop important skills such as critical thinking, time management, and research skills. Traditional methods often focus on memorization and passive learning, which may limit students' ability to apply knowledge in real-world situations. Traditional teaching method has limited scope for interactive learning. It may face challenges in reaching students in remote or underserved areas. The dependence on physical classrooms and resources can create barriers to education for those who lack access to such facilities.

Statement of the Problem

The mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions is traditional teaching methods, such as lectures and textbooks. This mode of teaching may not effectively develop important skills such as critical thinking, time management, and research skills. It often focusses on memorization and passive learning, which may limit students' ability to apply knowledge in real-world situations. Traditional teaching method has limited scope for interactive learning. The dependence on physical classrooms and resources can create barriers to education for those who lack access to such facilities. While the lecturer's level of knowledge is an asset, some students might be overwhelmed or daunted by a show of expertise. Some lecturers are preoccupied with maintaining their status as an expert and do not encourage questions or debate.

Also, if the lecturer's focus is on transmitting only facts and knowledge, they might not fully expose students to the underlying processes that lead to that knowledge.

Traditional teaching methods has been the most widely practiced mode of instructional delivery among lecturers in higher institutions. Not much effort has been made to effect a fundamental change to ensure effective learning. It seems like the lecturers and the students are "comfortable" with this conventional mode of teaching, while the enthusiasm for learning is continuing fading away. There is need for a paradigm shift of mode of lecture presentations. In the light of this, higher institutions in Nigeria need to seek for an innovative mode of instructional delivery. Hence, there is need to investigate embracing remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions: benefits, challenges and way forward.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate embracing remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions: benefits, challenges and way forward. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the benefits of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions.
2. Determine the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions.
3. Find out the way forward to the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the benefits of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions?
2. What are the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions?
3. What is the way forward to the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses formulated guided the study, and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic staff and students on the benefits of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic staff and students on the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions.



Ho₃: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic staff and student on the way forward to the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population for this study was 65,020 respondents made up of 18,299 academic staff and 46,721 students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. (**Source:** Personnel Service Unit of Registry and ICT Unit, UNN, 2024). The reason for choosing academic staff and students was because they were the categories of people that can give correct information with respect to the subject matter in this study. The sample for this study consisted of 300 respondents made up of 100 academic staff and 200 students randomly selected from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument for data collection was the researcher designed questionnaire structured on a 4 – point rating of Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point.

The instrument was face validated by two experts from the Department of Adult education and Extra Mural Studie and one expert from Measurement and Evaluation, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha formula. The reliability coefficient value yielded 0.92 on average which was considered adequate for the study. The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researcher and three research assistants. A total of 300 copies of the questionnaires were administered and collected on the spot from the respondents. Data obtained were analysed using mean score and standard deviation. In addition, the null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Any mean score lower than 2.50 implied disagree while equal to or higher than 2.50 implied agree to the items. Similarly for the testing of null hypotheses. If the t-calculated values are less than critical t-value, null hypotheses were accepted, but if the t-calculated values are more than critical t-value, null hypotheses were rejected.

Results

The results of the data analyses were presented based on research questions and hypotheses in tables.

Research Question One: What are the benefits of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions?

Table 1: Mean Ratings on the Benefits of Remote Learning as an Unswerving Mode of Instructional Delivery for Students in Higher Institutions

S/N	ITEMS Benefits of remote learning are:	Academic Staff			Students		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	REM	$\bar{X}$	SD	REM
1	It is flexible and convenient	2.76	0.94	A	3.14	1.00	A
2	It enables students to access course materials at their own pace	3.17	0.84	A	2.81	1.08	A
3	It enables students to access lectures at their own pace	3.20	0.74	A	3.30	0.89	A
4	It allows for a more personalized learning experience	3.12	0.87	A	3.28	0.93	A
5	It is a cost-effective alternative to traditional education	3.15	0.84	A	3.34	0.81	A
6	It guarantees students' academic achievement	2.23	0.72	D	2.26	0.96	D
7	It guarantees students financial success	2.28	1.14	D	2.21	0.99	D
8	It allows enhanced communication between students and instructors	3.28	0.73	A	3.20	0.97	A
9	It helps students to improve their technical skills	3.22	0.71	A	3.34	0.81	A
10	It fosters a sense of independence and self-discipline	3.23	0.75	A	3.42	0.77	A

$\bar{X}$ = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, rem = Remark

Table 1 shows the mean responses and standard deviations of the responses on the benefits of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions. Table 1 above shows that since the mean responses of items 6 and 7 are below the criterion mean of 2.50, the respondents disagree with them as the benefits of remote learning, while others with mean responses above 2.50 (criterion mean), indicate that respondents agree with the items as the benefits of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions. The standard deviations of the items range from 0.71 to 1.14 indicating that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their responses.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic staff and students on the benefits of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions.

Table 2: t-test of the Two Groups on the Benefits of Remote Learning as an Unswerving Mode of Instructional Delivery for Students in Higher Institutions

S/N	Group	No.	Mean	SD	DF	t.cal	t-value	Decision
1	Academic Staff	100	2.96	0.83	298	1.61	1.96	Not significant
2	Students	200	3.03	0.92				

In the table above, the t-calculated value of each item was obtained; the degree of freedom of all items was 298, while the critical t-table of 1.96 was obtained at 0.05 level of

significance. From the table, it can be seen that the t-calculated values for all items were less than critical t-value. Therefore, no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic staff and students on the benefits of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions was accepted.

Research Question Two: What are the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions?

Table 3: Mean Ratings on the Challenges of Remote Learning as an Unswerving Mode of Instructional Delivery for Students in Higher Institutions

S/N	ITEMS Challenges of remote learning are:	Academic Staff			Students		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	REM	$\bar{X}$	SD	REM
1	Absence of face-to-face encounter with instructions or lecturers.	2.76	0.94	A	3.14	1.00	A
2	Cheating cannot be restricted	3.17	0.84	A	2.81	1.08	A
3	Impersonation cannot be restricted	3.20	0.74	A	3.30	0.89	A
4	Plagiarism cannot be restricted	3.12	0.87	A	3.28	0.93	A
5	Poor lecture halls	2.17	0.77	DA	2.38	0.84	DA
6	Unstable power supply on campus	2.45	0.63	DA	2.14	0.73	DA
7	Absence of essential personal interactions	3.23	1.11	A	3.19	0.84	A
8	Lack of students' motivation towards online teaching and learning	3.31	0.74	A	3.14	0.95	A
9	Some lecturers lack the relevant skills to carry out online remote teaching and learning	3.16	0.76	A	3.26	0.79	A
10	Unstable internet connection and poor electronics devices	3.30	0.77	A	3.31	0.82	A

X = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, rem = Remark

The result in table 3 shows the mean responses and standard deviation of the respondents on the menace of internet fraud among the students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The analysis on Table 3 shows that since the mean responses of items 5 and 6 are below the criterion mean of 2.50, the respondents disagreed that the items are the challenges of remote learning, while others with mean responses above 2.50 (criterion mean), indicate that respondents agree with them as the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.63 to 1.08 indicating that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their response.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic staff and students on the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions.

Table 4: t-test of the Two Groups on the Menace of Internet Fraud Among the Students of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

S/N	Group	No.	Mean	SD	DF	t.cal	t-value	Decision
1	Academic Staff	100	2.99	0.82	298	1.75	1.96	Not significant
2	Students	200	3.00	0.89				

In the table above, the t-calculated value of each item was obtained; the degree of freedom of all items was 298, while the critical t-table of 1.96 was obtained at 0.05 level of significance. From the table, it can be seen that the t-calculated values for all items were less than critical t-value. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic staff and students on the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions was accepted.

Research Question Three: What is the way forward to the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions?

Table 5: Mean Ratings on the Way Forward to the Challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions

S/N	ITEMS	Academic Staff			Students		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	REM	$\bar{X}$	SD	REM
1	The use of suitable online platform	2.72	0.92	A	3.09	0.98	A
2	Applying synchronous and asynchronous tools	3.14	0.83	A	2.81	1.08	A
3	giving feedback to increase students' motivation and participation	3.17	0.73	A	3.25	0.88	A
4	Practice self-discipline by creating an online learning schedule	3.09	0.86	A	3.23	0.92	A
5	Take study breaks to avoid burnout and lower screen-time levels	2.72	0.92	A	3.09	0.98	A
6	Dedicate a quiet study space with no distractions	3.14	0.83	A	2.81	1.08	A
7	Managing time effectively	3.20	1.10	A	3.19	0.84	A
8	Access to a reliable internet connection and good electronics devices	3.28	0.73	A	3.13	0.95	A
9	Self-motivation	3.12	0.74	A	3.26	0.79	A
10	Only lecturers with relevant skills are to be allowed to carry out online remote teaching and learning	3.27	0.76	A	3.29	0.81	A

X = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, rem = Remark

Table 5 shows the mean responses and standard deviations of the responses on the way forward to the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions. The analysis on Table 5 shows that all the items have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. This shows that the responses indicate that all the items are the



way forward to the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions. The standard deviation of the items ranges from 0.73 – 1.10, which indicates that the respondents were not too far from each other and from the mean in their responses.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic staff and student on the way forward to the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions.

Table 6: t-test of the two groups on the way forward to the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions

S/N	Group	No.	Mean	SD	DF	t.cal	t-value	Decision
1	Academic Staff	100	3.09	0.84	298	1.48	1.96	Not significant
2	Students	200	3.12	0.93				

In the table above, the t-calculated value of each item was obtained; the degree of freedom of all items was 298, while the critical t-table of 1.96 was obtained at 0.05 level of significance. From the table, it can be seen that the t-calculated values for all items were less than critical t-value. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic staff and student on the way forward to the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions was accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The result with respect to research question one and hypothesis one shows that both academic staff and students share or have a similar view on the benefits of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions. They agreed that the benefits of remote learning are: It is flexible and convenient, it enables students to access course materials at their own pace, it enables students to access lectures at their own pace, it allows for a more personalized learning experience, it is a cost-effective alternative to traditional education, it allows enhanced communication between students and instructors, it helps students to improve their technical skills and it fosters a sense of independence and self-discipline. This finding is inline with the disclosure made by talespin.com (2024) that remote learning is flexible and convenient, enables students to access course materials and lectures at their own pace and cost-effective alternative to traditional education. The finding is also in consonance with the depiction made by onlinemba.wsu.edu (2024) that remote learning position students for career advancement even while they are working, between jobs, or taking time to raise a family, help students to improve their technical skills and fosters a sense of independence and self-discipline.

The findings with respect to research question two and hypothesis two shows that academic staff and students have similar view on the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions. They agreed that the challenges of remote learning include: Absence of face-to-face encounter with instructions or lecturers, cheating cannot be restricted, impersonation cannot be restricted, plagiarism cannot be restricted, absence of essential personal interactions, lack of students' motivation towards online teaching and learning, some lecturers lack the relevant skills to carry out online remote teaching



and learning, unstable internet connection and poor electronics devices. This finding is in harmony with the note made by Brophy (2015) that one of the challenges in remote learning is lack of students' motivation towards online teaching and learning. The finding is also in line with the note made by Abd Aziz (2020) that remote learning is impeded by inadequate infrastructure such as unstable internet connection and poor electronics devices.

The findings with respect to research question three and hypothesis three shows that the academic staff and students have similar view on the way forward to the challenges of remote learning as an unswerving mode of instructional delivery for students in higher institutions. They agreed that the way forward to the challenges of remote learning are: The use of suitable online platform, applying synchronous and asynchronous tools, giving feedback to increase students' motivation and participation, practice self-discipline by creating an online learning schedule, take study breaks to avoid burnout and lower screen-time levels, dedicate a quiet study space with no distractions, managing time effectively, access to a reliable internet connection and good electronics devices, self-motivation and only lecturers with relevant skills are to be allowed to carry out online remote teaching and learning. This finding is in line with statement credited to Rahman (2020) that there are a few strategies that can be implemented in online remote teaching and learning such as the use of suitable online platform, applying synchronous and asynchronous tools as well as giving feedback to increase students' motivation and participation. The finding is also in consonance with the statement credited to thinkific.com (2024) that the solution to remote learning challenges are: practice self-discipline by creating an online learning schedule, take study breaks to avoid burnout and lower screen-time levels and dedicate a quiet study space with no distractions and become familiar with online support systems in place.

Conclusion

The paper brings to the fore the benefits of remote learning so that Nigeria can harness the full potential of remote learning as an innovative instructional delivery strategy to increase broader access to higher education, to augment classroom instruction and eventually intensify students' learning outcomes in traditional learning institutions respectively. It also underscores the contributions remote learning makes towards improving teaching and learning processes in higher institutions, as it provides opportunities for applying innovative pedagogical approaches to foster active learning. Remote learning is an effective tool to transfer knowledge and it has the potential for overtaking the traditional teaching method. Students' needs are becoming priority for instructors and; thus, higher institutions are implementing remote learning system in their own training programs. Through the study findings, it has been identified that remote learning has been beneficial to its users in many ways. It ensures ease of communication between lecturers and students, and contributes in developing students' skills. It further contributes in providing material to students in an interesting manner. Remote learning is suitable for students since it provides chances to enhance their learning and increase their abilities. Thus, higher institutions in Nigeria should make remote learning their utmost priority.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

1. The management of higher institutions should as a matter of urgency, invest in remote learning by way of upgrading their ICT architecture and organizing more training on remote learning content development.
2. Higher institutions intending to implement remote learning should design and offer courses specifically towards addressing different learning styles instead of implementing wholesale implementation of remote learning.
3. Government should undertake massive in-service training and retraining on remote learning through workshops, conferences, seminars and symposia.
4. Indigenous information technology professionals could be engaged and trained to develop software packages to reduce the cost of remote learning delivery to higher institutions.
5. Federal Government should expedite the implementation of the National ICT Policy to ensure that every higher institution has access to high-speed Internet broadband
6. Tertiary institutions should invest in cloud-based computing systems and open educational resources to reduce the cost of remote learning integration and implementation in their institutions.

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