

COVID-19 PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN AND THE CURRENT TRENDS OF ONLINE LEARNING: ISSUES AND PROSPECTS OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Dr. Imaobong M. Akpan and Dr. Imoh-Obong Inyang Inyang

Department of Social Studies
Akwa Ibom State College of Education
akpanimaobong22@yahoo.com

Abstract

Social Studies is a contemporary subject by nature, this requires its teachers to use special delivering strategies and features. With the current trends of online learning due to covid-19 lockdown introduced globally, it has become imperative for Social Studies teaching to be focused towards online teaching and learning, thus the worry for this study. This study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State, using three local government areas, Essien Udim, Ikot Ekpene and Abak all in Akwa Ibom, Nigeria. The population of the study was two hundred and fifty five (255) participants that were made up of One Hundred and eighty (180) JSS3 students and seventy five (75) Social Studies teachers that participated in the study. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The instrument used in generating data was online questionnaire. The instrument used in collecting data was validated by Social Studies expert and the reliability index of the instrument was established by 0.82 before administered online to the participants. Simple percentage was used for data analysis. The findings of the result revealed that online learning has prospects and suitable for social studies. Based on the result of the findings, recommendation was made that the prospects should be harnessed for the improvement of Social Studies teaching and learning in Nigeria.

Keywords: Covid-19 Lockdown, Online Learning, Prospects Of Social Studies Education

Introduction

The issue of Covid-19 pandemic, which is otherwise called Coronavirus broke out first in Wuhan in the Central part of China in 2019. Since its outbreak, the virus has circulated speedily and rapidly to every continent of the world except Antarctica. The virus and its threatening force wrapped the entire universe and every sector of man's sphere of life which education is included. Since the inception of this pandemic (Covid-19) outbreak, series of cases and deaths have been recorded across two hundred and sixteen (216) countries of the world. Here in Africa, which Nigeria has been showcased, her giant Covid-19 infections have been registered across the thirty six states of the country, including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. As at the time of this write up, more than three hundred and forty nine (349) cases have been reported, while more than sixty one thousand, three hundred and thirty

seven (61,337) recovery cases and almost one thousand one hundred and sixty three (1,163) death as recorded by the NCDC, 2020 and 2021. Going by the drive of Covid-19 pandemic, lockdown orders were introduced across the nations including Nigeria, these measures have brought negative effect on the educational institutions across the countries (World Bank 2020). This drastic changes caused by the pandemic, also triggered rapid changes in the educational sector, and thereby resulting in an upsurge in online teaching and learning which most educational institutions have subscribed to.

Educational institutions have responded to the lockdown pandemic shift with different facets of strategies. these include the use of YouTube, Google Classroom, Module, Google meet, Zoom, Canvass network Learning Management System and a whole other online facilities (Saavedra, 2020). Moreover, the cost implication of online teaching and learning as well as its preservation of school physical facilities and its dynamic nature will help one to believe that online teaching will continue to be the order of the education procedure after covid-19 pandemic (Atubi and Obro, 2020).

Stauffer (2020) further explains the advantage of online learning as an effective and viable strategic teaching and learning process for educational institutions especially in a time of lockdown such as the ones emanated from Covid-19 Pandemic ravaging the world today. Stauffer also pointed out the benefits of online teaching and learning in this era as a major method of increasing students' participation in learning which can be blended with other teaching methods.

Online teaching and learning makes it possible for implementers of the curriculum to administer various teaching and learning strategies for instruction, for examples the educator or implementer of the curriculum can decide to make use of idea, text and audio or thumbnail as instructional tools. This type of learning saves reasonable time as many educational curriculums provide already prepared lesson plan, materials and decision making (evaluations).

Still on the issue of online learning strategy, Li and Lulani (2020) added that the lockdown caused by covid-19 pandemic, over 1.2 billion learners are idle at home instead of learning in schools, this constitutes the major difference in the manner and approach education is being delivered. The innovative approach of upward surge in online learning and teaching has promoted the assumption of digital approach, by this it means that the changes caused by Coronavirus lockdown may have some benefits for education, and social studies educators. must be encouraged to acquire this noble prospect of digital approach. This study therefore seeks to address the upsurge of online learning prospects for social studies in Nigeria.

The Concept of Online Learning

The global worlds of technology have created a new form of online learning. The emergency of this new form of learning have serious impacts for the nature and the purpose of education (Atubi&Oboro, 2020). This electronic learning, that is otherwise called (e-learning) involves the utilization of novel technology like network digital device (Internet), computers, smart phones, online course contents and electronic media to enhance learning

Atubi and Oboro (2020) added that online learning is the latest and the most

appropriate form of education from a distance within the last decade. It has become a major source of higher education and the trends keep emerging. They further highlighted the positive form of this learning which include: learning convenience, a level playing field for all learners, maximization of physical resources, innovative teaching etc. Also, online learning emphasizes interaction in a learning environment because it gives the instructor and the student opportunity to play active roles in the educational process. Authority like Commlab India (2014) pointed out major categories of online learning strategies:

- i. Synchronous online learning,
- ii. Asynchronous online learning.

Synchronous online learning involves a learning process that is literal; where learners and the teacher interact online at a given time from two or many different locations. The teacher sends the research materials and the learners receive them through the internet, chats, video conference, or application through mobile phones devices. This particular online learning has gained much popularity during this covid-19 pandemic lockdown and has an enormous prospect for social studies education during and after these lockdown episodes.

For asynchronous online learning, it does not require the teacher and the students to be online at the same time, but learning can take place at different times. Technology devices applicable to this type of online learning includes: blogs, audio, and video messages, CDs, DVDs, e-mail, eBooks and many others. From series of experience, it appears that many scholars or learners appreciate asynchronous online learning compared to synchronous learning because it gives the learners opportunity to learn at their own pace and at preferred time.

Still on the online learning exercise, Imoniwe (2019) recommended functional training for student-teachers, teachers and lecturers on the effective utilization of online learning technology, for the purpose of this research teaching and learning. Moreover, Bali and Liu (2019) indicated that most students are comfortable when learning online, because it gives them ample opportunity to be innovative with computer system and programme. Again, Joseph (2020) observed that over 30 percent of the students of higher education in the United States are studying at least one online course. Josep also justified his claim by saying that 90% of the students are of the opinion that online learning is better than traditional classroom learning. Entrepreneurship campus magazine (2017) further explained that online learning is highly important because it affords everyone access to education irrespective of the location and what they want to learn. Beside this, there is need for every student to appraise their uniqueness and make a choice based on their needs, resources and plans as regards online learning, may not be good for learners, otherwise, online learning is a convenient alternative for many with potentials endless opportunities and enormous prospects for social studies education.

Issues And Prospects For Social Studies Education Through Online Learning

From the above analogy, it is the researcher's point of view that integration of online learning into Social Studies by Social Studies educators and curriculum developers will facilitate the teaching and learning of the subject and therefore become an integral component of Social Studies curriculum. Tschida and Servier (2014) are in support of the above opinion when they examined the teaching of Social Studies online as an example for

investigating the broad implications of online instructions and courses for teacher education. Also Adediran, Adelami, & Adebajo (2015) conducted a study on the adoption of online learning in social studies at secondary school level, the findings revealed that online learning was better and preferred by secondary school students in Nigeria. Bail & Liu, (2015) carried out a study on the implication of online learning and the traditional classroom learning, they also accessed the perception of Social Studies students towards online learning, this finding also revealed that there was no significant difference in learning between both methods among the participants.

Adapting online learning to Social Studies was illustrated by Ferlazzo (2020) who observed that Coronavirus has affected not just our health, but our schools system, jobs and environments. Social Studies is focused on studies of man and his environment. With the help of online learning and research, social studies students will be in a better position to understand and explain reasons why Coronavirus hit countries like United State and Brazil more seriously than others. Also, they can compare the different types of government, their economic progress and responses to the pandemic. Online learning can help social studies learners to develop plans that will help in surviving the pandemic, they can offer solutions to adapt, use what they learn to assist the communities and make out cost analysis and other benefits that can help in re-opening the economy. Moreover, Social Studies can benefit by helping the students in processing information, read graphs and also make forecasts to enlighten their immediate societies concerning the danger of the pandemic.

Heap (2017) highlighted the prospects of online learning to include advancement of carrier, hobbies, flexible schedule and learning environment. Online learning reduces cost of learning, promotes independent learning, enhances creativity, promotes self-confidence, self-discipline and exposes social studies students to wider scope of learning areas. This study therefore focused on the following research questions.

1. What are the prospects of online learning for Social Studies?
2. How appropriate is online platforms for teaching and learning Social Studies?
3. How can online learning be adopted for Social Studies education?

Methods

This study was carried out in the three local government area of Akwa Ibom state. They are Essien Udim, Ikot Ekpene and Abak local government areas respectively. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. There searchers found it appropriate to use these areas in gathering data of this nature from people. Two hundred and fifty five (255) people were used as the population of the study. This was made up of seventy five Social Studies teachers (SST) and one hundred and eighty upper basic, basic nine Social Studies students (JSS3). Purposive sample size was adapted for the study and a questionnaire of 30 items titled prospects, appropriateness and adoption of online learning for Social Studies questionnaire (PAAOLSSQ) was designed for online with Google form application to generate data for the study. The instrument has been divided into three segments; section (A), for collecting in respects of prospects, section (B) for the level of appropriateness and (C) for the integration of online learning for Social Studies.

The validation and reliability of the instrument was established within the range of 0.89 before administered to the online participants. This helps the researcher to get the feedback immediately from the respondents. The rating of the responses was based on a two

point scale of Agree A and Disagree D. Simple percentage was used as a tool to answer the research questions. Any items that recorded 50% and above responses on (agree) is considered positive, while 50% and above responses on (disagree) was considered negative.

Results/Findings

Table 1: Prospects of Online Learning for Social Studies Education

S/N	Items	No. of Agree	% of Agree	No. of Disagree	% of Disagree	Decision
1	Online learning will make the learning of Social Studies flexible in terms of learning pace	247	96.9%	8	3.1%	Positive
2	Online learning can become an integral part of Social Studies education	231	90.5%	24	9.4%	Positive
3	The content knowledge of Social Studies can be enhanced through online learning	240	94.11%	15	5.9%	Positive
4	Learning satisfaction and retention can be encouraged through online learning of Social Studies	233	91.4%	22	8.6%	Positive
5	Online learning can aid better processing of information pertaining to Social Studies	213	83.5%	42	16.5%	Positive
6	Students cooperation, self discipline and sense of responsibility can be promoted by online learning of Social Studies materials	198	77.6%	57	22.4%	Positive
7	Online learning will enhance the understanding of graphs and maps by Social Studies learners	168	65.9%	87	34.11%	Positive
8	Different learning styles can be made effective through online learning	97	38%	158	62%	Negative
9	Online learning exposes Social Studies to different areas of study in the subject	252	98.8%	3	1.2%	Positive
10	Online learning can aid the advancement of career choices in Social Studies education	223	87.5%	32	12.5%	Positive

The result from Table 1, indicated that all items give positive response except one. This implies that online learning has great prospects for Social Studies education. The reason is that all the data analysed recorded responses on items of above 50%. Only 8 responses indicated that using different learning styles for online teaching of Social Studies may not be effective.

Research Question 2:How appropriate is online platforms for teaching and learning Social Studies?

Table 2:Appropriateness of Online Learning in Social Studies education?

S/N	Items	No. of Agree	% of Agree	No. of Disagree	% of Disagree	Decision
1	Online learning can make up for the inadequacies of Social Studies teachers	108	42.4%	147	57.6%	Negative
2	Updated and current information on Social Studies content can be accessed through online learning	246	96.5%	9	3.5%	Positive
3	All aspects of Social Studies can be taught with onlinechannels	224	87.8%	31	12.2%	Positive
4	Social Studies teaching methods can be applied to teach and learn online	200	78.4%	55	21.6%	Positive
5	Online learning promotes student centred instruction in Social Studies	239	93.7%	16	6.3%	Positive
6	Online learning can break the obstacle of distance in learning Social Studies	254	99.6%	1	0.4%	Positive
7	Functional education of Social Studies students and teachers will be heightened when they learn online	237	92.9%	18	7.1%	Positive
8	Online learning has gained much popularity and so will be suitable and appropriate for Social Studies education	223	87.5%	32	12.5%	Positive
9	Online learning will expose students and teachers of Social Studies to diverse learning plans, knowledge and resources	242	94.9%	13	5.1%	Positive
10	Online learning have potentials and endless opportunities for the advancement of Social Studies education	239	93.7%	16	6.3%	Positive

Analysis from Table 2 indicated that item 1 shown negative response, this implies that online learning may not be able to make up for the inadequacies of Social Studies teachers. But items 2 – 10 showed positive responses, which indicated that these items suggested that online teaching will be suitable and appropriate for Social Studies.

Research Question 3: How can online learning be adopted for Social Studies education?

Table 3: Adoption of Online Learning for Social Studies Curriculum

S/N	Items	No. of Agree	% of Agree	No. of Disagree	% of Disagree	Decision
1	Through educational applications e.g. Google classroom, Google meet, modules etc	236	92.5%	19	7.5%	Negative
2	Through educational learning management systems e.g. canvass	168	65.9%	87	34.1%	Positive
3	Use of online chat platforms like WhatsApp and face book	246	96.5%	9	3.5%	Positive
4	Use of virtual learning e.g. zoom and Skype	217	85%	78	15%	Positive
5	Through audio messaging tools or digital audio players	43	16.9%	212	83.1%	Negative
6	Use of correspondence like emails and eBooks	12	4.7%	243	95.3%	Negative
7	Telecourses delivered via television and radio broadcasts	9	3.5%	246	96.5%	Negative
8	The use of computer to learn static content from CDs and DVDs	24	9.4%	231	90.6%	Negative
9	Internet based learning in a normal class interactions	204	80%	51	20%	Positive
10	The creation of different blogs and websites for the sole purpose of learning Social Studies	105	42.2%	150	58.8%	Negative

Adopting the use of educational applications like Google classroom and Google meet, module, learning management systems, online chat platforms, virtual learning and internet based classroom learning received extremely high positive responses by implication these online learning methods were highly recommended by participants for Social Studies. On the other hand, the use of audio/digital tools, correspondence, telecourses, CDS or DVDs

and the use of blogs and websites recorded below 50% agree responses. This indicates that these tools are not favourable for online learning of Social Studies.

Discussion of Results/Findings

From the analysis in Table 1, item 1, the findings of the study showed that online learning has prospects for Social Studies and may be used to promote its study. This finding is in consonance with Tschida and Sevier (2014), Adediran, et al (2015), Bali and Liu (2018) and Ferlazzo (2020). These studies revealed that the adoption of online learning for Social Studies education especially at the secondary school level and during a situation as presented by the Coronavirus lockdown has significant prospects for the subject and therefore should be made an integral component of Social Studies curriculum.

Findings from research question 2 also indicated that respondents viewed that online teaching is appropriate for Social Studies. This is in agreement with Stauffer (2020) who observed that online learning is the latest and most appropriate form of distance education. Stauffer clearly indicated that online learning is an effective and vibrant educational strategy for educational institutions and programs, especially secondary schools system in Nigeria and Social Studies education in general.

Lastly, the study also indicated that the idea of adoption of online learning for Social Studies should involve the utilization of applications like Google classroom, Google meet, learning management systems, online chat platforms, virtual learning (Zoom and Skype), and internet based classroom learning. Other forms of online learning like telecourses, CDs, DVDs, correspondence and websites recorded less than 50% results. These findings are in agreement with the studies of Commlab India (2014) and Saavedra (2020). Commlab India identified two major categories and many examples of online learning tools under these categories. Similarly, Saavedra (2020) enumerated different coping strategies and tools used by educational institutions as responses for the Covid-19 lockdown and recommended these tools for online learning, hence they can be adopted to promote Social Studies.

The study therefore indicated that there is a positive response in the view of respondents as regards the online tools to be adopted for Social Studies education. Online chat platforms like WhatsApp and face book were the most preferred, others were educational applications, learning management system, virtual learning tools and the use of internet based learning in the classroom.

Recommendations

Based on the results and the findings of this study, the researchers made the following recommendations:

1. That the prospects of online learning for Social Studies education be harnessed by the Social Studies teachers and students by the secondary schools in Nigeria
2. Online learning should be declared as appropriate and suitable for Social Studies education by curriculum planners in the education sectors of Nigeria.
3. Online tools like Google classroom, Google meet, WhatsApp, face book, zoom, learning management systems and others should be adopted for Social Studies.
4. Similarly, schools should be equipped with computers and internet connection to enable classroom internet based learning of Social Studies.

Conclusion

Online learning has positive indications and prospects for Social Studies education and this study has exposed the suitability of online learning for Social Studies teachers, educators and the students. These prospects should therefore be integrated not only for the period of Covid-19 lockdown, but also for future pedagogy process of the subject. Finally, relevant tools that will enhance online learning should be adopted towards the improvement of Social Studies innovative approach of learning through online.

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