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The Plausibility of Distance and Computer-Assisted Learning in an era of Fuel Subsidy Removal: a Case Study of the Main Campus of Lagos State University

Following the removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria on 29th of May 2023, residents of Lagos State have witnessed a significant spike in cost of living. Incidentally, this has also turned into a serious challenge in the educational sector as this has affected the continued sustenance of the traditional mode of learning where students and lecturers meet on campus on a daily basis. Hence, the present research offers distance computer-assisted learning via Open and Distance Learning (ODL) as a complement to traditional or conventional learning in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Distance computer-assisted learning boasts mainly of synchronous, asynchronous or blended means of learning all of which have been used in the past to complement face-to-face interactions between lecturers and students of Lagos State University. It is on the basis of the economic inconveniences of fuel subsidy removal with the declaration of the three-day work week by the Lagos State University that this research proposes distance computer-assisted learning to mediate the gap created between lecturers and students of Lagos State University. However, the present research concerns with students' readiness and awareness of this mode of learning. The methodology adopted for this research is quantitative analysis which involves the use of questionnaires offered to 380 students of Lagos State University in February 2024. The result shows that whereas students are willing to adopt distance computer-assisted learning, the challenges of power and telecommunications appear as serious challenges. It is the

submission of this study that when the recommendations offered in this research are explored, ODL may serve as a complement to conventional learning.

***Keywords**: Computer Assisted Learning, Fuel Subsidy Removal, Lagos State University, Nigeria, Open and Distance Learning.*

Introduction

In most institutions of higher education in Nigeria, the traditional mode of instruction continues to command much influence and use. This seems to be the norm even in the face of the difficulties tied to teaching of large groups or even persons who would have loved to learn but unable to do so due to space-time constraints. However, in an era of fuel subsidy removal where it has become increasingly difficult for the conventional learning method of meeting in real time between students and lecturers to hold sway, it has become paramount to consider some of the ways through which learning may be sustained. This research seeks to establish the basis for the plausibility of computer-assisted learning in Lagos State University where the researchers are based. The need to engage this research problem became pertinent following the removal of petrol subsidy by the Federal Government of Nigeria in May, 2023. Reacting to this, the Lagos State Government also decided to ease the burden of its employees through the introduction of a three-day work week [Olanrewaju 2023]. This means that students and lecturers can only engage in the university three times a week. This study therefore seeks to consider if computer-assisted learning may be invited to complement what may be lost during the remaining two days. The study therefore employs a quantitative approach to engage the validity of its hypothesis on ways through which computer-assisted learning may complement conventional learning in Lagos State University, following the declaration of a three-day work week.

In the pages ahead, four sections will be noted. The first is the literature review. There, the discussion pertaining to the meaning of computer-assisted learning, its nature and scope will be held. The economic implications and burden of petrol subsidy removal with its impact on the students of Lagos State University, is also undertaken. The second part describes the methodology and its justification and relevance to the scope of the inquiry. The third part analyses the results of the data retrieved from the questionnaires administered to the 380 students of the Lagos State University. This section analyses the results to deduce whether or not the feedback from the surveys supports or opposes the inquiry concerning the plausibility of computer-assisted learning in the institution, following the removal of fuel subsidy. The fourth part is the limitation, recommendations plan and conclusion of the study.

Literature Review

It is interesting to note that in the past, great intellectual attention has been paid to one of the most hurtful and intricate economic policies in Nigeria, which is the issue of fuel subsidy removal. This policy has been igniting arguments and protests nation-wide each time it rears its ugly head. Recently, the controversial policy came to the fore once again immediately after the inauguration of the country's newly democratically elected government on May 29, 2023, following the announcement by the new president that "fuel subsidy is gone". Foremost studies on the policy like Durojaiye (2015), Adugbo (2016) and Stephen (2015) have attested to the spiral effects of the policy on all sectors of the economy. The removal of the fuel subsidy presents itself as one of the efforts of contemporary African states to critically engage and focus on their developmental goals [Ofuasia 2022; Ofuasia, & Ibiyemi 2022]. It can be ascertained from these studies that fuel subsidy removal in the country affects the cost of living, reduces the consumption, productivity, savings and investment levels of the people. The aim of the present study, therefore, is to probe further into how these economic inconveniences caused by fuel subsidy removal can be mitigated by using computer-assisted learning to mediate the gap created between lecturers and students of Lagos State University.

The removal of petrol subsidy by the Federal Government of Nigeria, no doubt has had a high level impact on all elements of the economy. It has served as the dominant factor for the escalation of food prices, service provision fees as well as cost of transportation [Izuaka 2023]. Although the Federal Government has promised some palliatives to ease the burden initiated by the removal of subsidy, states governments embarked on ways of easing the financial and economic burdens visited on their indigenes following fuel subsidy removal. This does not exclude Lagos State. It is on this note that the Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu announced that the employees of the State Government commence a three-day work week [Olanrewaju 2023]. What implications will this have on tertiary studies in the Lagos State University?

It is helpful to, at this juncture, talk briefly about the structure of Lagos State University. First, Lagos State University came into existence in 1983 following the enabling law of Lagos State. It has three operating campuses namely: Epe (for Engineering), Ikeja (School of Medicine) and Ojo (the main campus).

With the removal of petrol subsidy, it is clear that the expenditure for running the university will be colossally affected. Activities from the cost of transportation to cost educational-related materials are necessarily affected [Olanrewaju 2023]. Following fuel subsidy removal, the cost of living in Lagos State has tripled and this has also affected the continued sustenance of the

traditional mode of learning where students and lecturers meet on campus on a daily basis.

Following from this observation, the present research offers computer-assisted learning via Open and Distance Learning (ODL, hereafter) with its approach to pedagogy [Damkor, & Haruna 2015] as a complement to traditional or conventional learning in tertiary institutions. Computer-assisted learning boasts mainly of synchronous, asynchronous or blended elements, all of which have been used to complement face-to-face interactions in Lagos State University. What are these elements of distance computer-assisted learning all about? This will be attended to shortly. In the meantime, the agenda is to what computer-assisted learning means in relation to petrol subsidy removal.

Since computer-assisted learning is basically about the use of information and communication technology to engage in learning, it is important to restate again that there are two aspects of such: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous learning takes place in real time in which the respondents interact in a specific virtual environment at a set time. This type of learning allows students to ask and the facilitator to answer questions instantly, and students to interact [Okworo, & Anatsui 2016]. Synchronous learning allows for real-time online contact, collaboration, flexibility and individualized learning opportunities [Ghilay 2022]. Some methods used in synchronous learning include video conferencing, teleconferencing, live chatting, and live-streamed lectures that have to be viewed in real time [Udofia, & Tommy 2021]. The advantages of this type of learning method are: classroom engagement, dynamic learning and instructional depth.

As for the asynchronous learning, it occurs on the schedules of students rather than in real time. It is the type of learning environments that are one-way systems which do not allow for real-time collaboration or live participation. In this method, the facilitator provides study materials in various forms (e.g. texts, videos and recordings) and the learners access this information on their own time and complete their course requirements as long as they meet deadlines. Examples of asynchronous methods of learning are self-guided lesson modules, lecture notes, virtual libraries, pre-recorded video or audio content, links to internet sources, and online discussion boards [Raymond et al. 2016]. It is as a result of the foregoing that the present research wishes to inquire into the validity and practicability of computer-assisted learning.

In addition, it is helpful to highlight that these two types of distance learning methods cannot be done without the assistance or use of computer or smart phones. It means both the facilitators and the learners should be computer literate to some extent. It is at this juncture that the moderating effects of computer self-efficacy come into the discursive fray.

Computer self-efficacy, according to Raymond and colleagues (2016), is an individual's belief in his or her ability to apply computer skills to a wider

range of tasks. Computer self-efficacy has a direct influence on classroom performance since the use of technology improves students' learning and motivation [Grof 2013] as it can be associated with training effectiveness, intentions to use computers, perceived ease of use and test performance [Damkor, & Haruna 2015]. Alam (2016) defines computer self-efficacy as an individual's perception of efficacy in performing specific computer related tasks within the domain of general computing. The principal question, then, is to inquire into the reservations, preparedness and suspicions of students of Lagos-State University to engage in computer-assisted learning.

In spite of the torrents of works that have considered the efficacy of computer-assisted learning, almost very few of them have been able to consider its relevance within the context of use among Nigerian institutions. The overall research aim is to consider the plausibility of computer-assisted learning among students in Lagos State University in an era of fuel subsidy removal.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this research is quantitative analysis which involves the use of questionnaires offered to students in main campus of Lagos State University for understanding how computer-assisted learning can be useful in an era where subsidy removal has caused socio-economic burdens and inconveniences. The use of the quantitative method for this research is therefore not in doubt. Leavy (2017) asserts that quantitative research investigates how people's attitudes and behaviors are influenced by the social, socio-economic, cultural or environmental context in which they live by looking at people in their actual environments. This exemplifies how the study strategy affects how data are interpreted. It is clear that the findings of Leavy (2017) clearly validate the quantitative approach employed for this research since it will require empirical and numerical data to substantiate its claims.

To accomplish this, empirical evidence is gathered through surveys and its data is analysed to determine which factors have the greatest relationship [Halperin, & Health 2020]. Quantitative method is appropriate when the target population to be studied is very large [Sreekumar 2023]. Similarly, according to the framework, there are three research approaches: deductive, inductive, and abductive researches. Deductive research is appropriate for this project because it is typically employed when there is a clearly defined objective and outcome, and there is consequently less room for speculation in the research process because it relies on existing theories to generate new insights [Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Taherdoost 2022]. Due to the availability of empirical research on the subject, this approach is advantageous in this context. Thus, this study can apply established theories to analyze the factors

that may influence the plausibility of computer-assisted learning in Lagos State institutions of learning.

A total of 500 respondents were targeted in this research distributed among students of Lagos State University. Purposive sampling technique is used for selecting participants of the study. The justification for purposive sampling is based on the following:

S/N	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
1.	Students who are enrolled in Lagos State University	Students who are not enrolled in Lagos State University
2.	Students who have spent at least two sessions in Lagos State University	Students who have not spent at least than two sessions in Lagos State University

Being a primary quantitative research method, data was collated through questionnaires given to respondents who met the foregoing inclusion criteria in the Lagos State University, Ojo Campus. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive approach as it explores the contingency table analysis 'banners' and 'stubs.' Another pertinent advantage which justifies the use of the descriptive approach is that "a hypothesis is not needed at the beginning of the study and can be developed even after data collection" [Sreekumar 2023]. The essence of using this approach is to ensure a robust result which seeks to establish the basis for how e-learning or ODL may complement learning in Lagos State University. Central question then, is: "does the medium of instruction in Lagos State University influence the plausibility of computer-assisted learning in an era of petrol subsidy removal?"

Within the context of this research, two hypothetical variables are pertinent: "Lagos State University" and "attitude to computer-assisted learning in an era of petrol subsidy removal." These variables, when juxtaposed clearly reflect the essence of the central research question cast in the foregoing paragraph. Contingency table analysis is crucial when information about a subject is needed from a multiple group. Within this context, the views of students concerning computer-assisted learning in a three-day week academic era following the removal of fuel subsidy is appropriate for the use of a four-fold contingency table analysis.

Critical Analysis

In an era of fuel subsidy removal where Lagos public officials and Lagos residents are seeking ways through which they can manage scarce resources and manage their expenditure, a research of this caliber speaks volume in economic terms. All stakeholders from government, academic staff, parents/guardians and students that are in Lagos State University will benefit from this research. As Lagos State government has already indicated that three

days of the week be dedicated for work, this research seeks to see how the remaining two working days are used for learning through computer-assisted learning. This way, the students' interests in learning are sustained, the lecturers are engaged and government expenditure on tertiary education is properly managed.

Following the administration of questionnaires to 500 students of Lagos State University, 380 students responded as the data retrieved were analyzed and situated within their relevant spaces of the contingency table. Of the students of Lagos State University where the survey was carried out, 215 were female students whereas 149 were male students as the sexual orientation of 16 students does not fall within any of the two dominant sexes. 329 respondents are between the ages of 17 and 25 whereas those respondents who are 25 years and above are 51. Moreover, the cells of the table below display in a four-fold contingency table, the frequent counts of the number of respondents in relation to the questions in the questionnaire.

S/N	Question	Yes	No	Undetermined
1.	Are you familiar with computer software packages such as MS Word, PDF, Excel Sheet, etc.?	328	47	05
2.	Do you consider yourself as someone who is computer literate?	309	62	09
3.	Have you heard of the three-day work week of Lagos State Government?	51	324	05
4.	Do you think more can be done with the two non-work days	233	98	49
5.	Are you familiar applications like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Skype?	360	17	03
6.	Do you think applications such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Skype may be useful for enhancing learning during the two-non-work days?	337	39	04
7.	Would you be willing to complement learning via any of these media?	326	39	15
8.	Will data/internet network constitute an impasse to learning on any of these platforms?	328	45	07
9.	Will battery life and/or electricity constitute an impasse to learning on any of these platforms?	328	43	09
10.	Do you think computer-assisted learning can reduce costs associated with face-to-face/conventional learning?	297	77	06
11.	Has the government's policy on fuel subsidy removal affected your class attendance?	283	93	04

As the contingency table above indicates, there are eleven key questions that the selected students of Lagos State University (Main Campus) were

exposed to in relation to how computer-assisted learning may be relevant for overcoming the challenges of a post-subsidy economy. For the Lagos State University and its students surveyed, the charts below indicate the outcome.

When it comes to the capacity to use software packages and whether these students consider themselves as computer literates, the figures are good, giving 86.34% and 81.3% respectively. This figure is quite encouraging since it indicates that there is at least a basic foundation for computer-assisted learning. This is endorsed with the conviction among the respondents that they can use Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Skype for learning. Whereas 94.7% are aware of these software applications, another 88.7% are convinced that these channels may be useful for computer-assisted learning on the two days off work. The essence of questions (1), (2), (5) and (6) are crucial to the background for the implementation of computer-assisted learning in Lagos State University.

Whereas question (3) is about political and social awareness of the students regarding the cushioning efforts or palliatives put in place by the Lagos State Government, question (4) is about the willingness of the students to utilize the two-days off for serious non-face-to-face academic activities. The feedback from question (3) is not encouraging as 85.3% of the students are unaware of the Government's announcement of a three-day work week in the state. However, the seriousness and willingness of the students, as indicated in question (4) to make use of the two-day period is astounding as 61.3% is in the affirmative. In addition, 74.5% of the respondents affirm that the removal of fuel subsidy has had a negative impact on their studies in question (11). This is perhaps responsible for the conviction among the respondents that computer-assisted learning can reduce costs that are connected to face-to-face conventional studies as 78.2% affirm to question (10).

Nevertheless, the students are convinced that computer-assisted learning can be used to complement conventional learning. This is indicated by the 85.7% positive feedback provided for question (7). In spite of this conviction, it is important to foreground that there are challenges that come up with these convictions. These challenges are envisaged and information from respondents are retrieved via questions (8) and (9).

Given the peculiar nature of Nigeria's telecommunication and power sectors, questions (8) and (9) are concerned with these issues. Concerning question (8), 86.3% of respondents affirm that network and the availability of data constitute serious challenges to distance and computer-assisted learning. The same figure, 86.3% is derived from question (9) is also the case for respondents who point at electricity as another serious challenge to computer-assisted learning.

From the analysis of the data retrieved from respondents, it is interesting to point out that students of Lagos State University are open to distance computer-assisted learning. However, there are important hurdles that must be overcome

in order for this innovative method of learning to thrive. These, as already hinted are to be critically assessed. This will be addressed in the next section which contains the limitations, recommendations and conclusion of this inquiry.

Limitations and Recommendations

The primary limitation to the use of distance and computer-assisted learning for mediation of learning between lecturers and students of Lagos State University, following the feedback from respondents are reduced to two: power and telecommunications.

First, there are some plausible suggestions pertaining to the challenge relating to tension generated by the feedback from question (8). The question is an admixture of both the issues and challenges related to data and telecommunications. Whereas the former concerns with access to data, the latter is beyond the whims and caprices of individuals. Suggestions may only be offered regarding the first. Lagos State University may offer the students some data allowance that allows students to be able to partake in distance computer-assisted learning. This will go a long way to settle the question pertaining to access to data which is tied to access to distance computer-assisted learning. There are ways that the issue may be addressed. An aspect of the tuition fees of students may be dedicated to addressing the financial challenges related to allocating a significant amount of data to Lagos State University students to access distance computer-assisted learning. The second limitation is connected or tied to network issues. Definitely this is beyond Lagos State University and her stakeholders. This is an issue that is limited to the network providers. It is hoped that the hours of computer-assisted learning will be favorable for telecommunications network providers to guarantee a seamless engagement.

The second challenge is connected to power. Nigeria faces energy deficit and it is not surprising that this will constitute a monumental challenge to distance computer-assisted learning. One of the suggestions that we offer to overcome this challenge is the provision of power banks that will complement phones' battery life to students of Lagos State University. Already some students possess these power banks. It is therefore important for the University Management to emphasize the procurement of power banks to cater for steady power during the process of distance computer-assisted learning. The issue of power is an aftermath of the level of development that African faces as indicated by Ofuasia (2022). When the issue of power is addressed by the government, learners would not have to endure the unenviable status quo of power banks and mechanical generators for electricity to power their education-driven gadgets.

Conclusion

The essence of this research has been to uncover the grounds for distance computer-assisted learning in Lagos State University following the economic impact of the fuel subsidy removal and the reduction of the normal five days of work to a three work-day. The response from the administration of 380 questionnaires to students in the main campus of Lagos State University shows that two challenges – power and network are sacrosanct. Although this research has offered some recommendations for overcoming these limitations, it is important to stress that distance and open learning is the future of knowledge delivery and acquisition at the tertiary level in the future. Lagos State University therefore should consider seriously, these feed-backs in order to position herself as for the future and the demands that may arise thereof.

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Мохаммед Акінола Акомолафе, Оладжиде Абіодун Обі. **Прийнятність дистанційного та комп'ютерного навчання в епоху скасування субсидій на паливо: практичне дослідження головного кампусу Державного університету Лагосу**

Після скасування субсидій на пальне в Нігерії 29 травня 2023 року мешканці штату Лагос стали свідками значного зростання вартості життя. До речі, це також перетворилося на серйозну проблему в освітньому секторі, оскільки це вплинуло на продовження традиційного способу навчання, коли студенти та викладачі зустрічаються в кампусі щодня. Отже, дане дослідження пропонує дистанційне комп'ютерне навчання за допомогою відкритого та дистанційного навчання (ВДН) як доповнення до традиційного

або звичайного навчання у вищих навчальних закладах Нігерії. Дистанційне комп'ютерне навчання може похвалитися головним чином синхронними, асинхронними або змішаними засобами навчання, які всі використовувалися в минулому для доповнення особистої взаємодії між викладачами та студентами Державного університету Лагосу. Саме на основі аналізу економічних незручностей скасування субсидій на паливо з оголошенням триденного робочого тижня Державним університетом Лагосу це дослідження пропонує дистанційне комп'ютерне навчання для посередництва розриву, який утворився між викладачами та студентами Університету штату Лагос. Однак, дане дослідження стосується готовності та усвідомлення студентами такого способу навчання. У цьому дослідженні використано методологію кількісного аналізу, яка передбачає використання анкет, запропонованих 380 студентам Університету штату Лагос у лютому 2024 року. Результат показує, що в той час, як студенти готові використовувати дистанційне комп'ютерне навчання, з'являються серйозні виклики відключення електрики та телекомунікацій. Це дослідження полягає в тому, що коли рекомендації, запропоновані в цьому дослідженні, будуть вивчені, ВДН може служити доповненням до традиційного навчання.

Ключові слова: *комп'ютерне навчання, скасування субсидій на паливо, університет штату Лагос, Нігерія, відкрите та дистанційне навчання.*

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