Quality Assurance Policies and Practices for Effective Online Resilient University Education: The Case of Southwestern, Nigeria

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Abstract

Lockdown restrictions adopted worldwide to curb the health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic forced many traditional universities to adopt the online mode for continuation of pedagogical activities. In addition, to meliorate the concomitant economic effects of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria, on academic staff and students alike, many traditional universities have reverted to the inclusion of online teaching and learning. In order to attain effectiveness of online teaching and learning which has been adopted as the panacea for resilient education in the face of diverse challenges, quality assurance is vital. This study therefore described online learning environment in Southwestern Nigerian universities. It examined existing quality assurance policies for online education in Southwestern Nigerian universities. It also investigated practices for online education in Southwestern Nigerian universities. These were with a view to providing information on the practice of quality online resilient education in Southwestern Nigerian universities in the face of health and economic adversity. The study adopted the qualitative survey research design using secondary data, interviews and practice experience for collection of data. Findings of the study provided empirical information: on the online environment in Nigerian universities, the quality assurance policy and practice situation of online education.

Key words: Effective resilient university education; Pedagogical shift; Quality assurance; Policies and practices; Online teaching and learning; University academic staff and students

INTRODUCTION

Across the world, from the year 2019, the Covid19 pandemic truncated and strained teaching and learning activities, making participation in educational activities arduous, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria. The foregoing, combined with the fact that physical distancing was identified as a major contributory factor to curbing the spread and severity of COVID19 and its variants (Yee et al, 2020; Kejela, 2020; Esu *et al.*, 2025), left university learners and their instructors with no other option than the use of online teaching- learning mode, especially for large classes. The face to face traditional method was still retained for smaller classes, thus birthing (Akinola, ,Adewole, Araneta, Tino, & Fideli, 2023; Rabai, Afsheen, Islam, & Kamaal, 2023; Wang *et al.*, 2024; Martins *et al.*, 2025).

In addition, observations of the researcher have shown that to ameliorate the challenges encountered by university students and lecturers alike, as a result of the total removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria in May, 2023. Thus serving as one of the resilience strategies adopted to achieve continuous education processes in universities, some teachers have reverted to the hybrid method for teaching-learning activities. Thus, the traditional method which focuses on the face to face mode is gradually fading out as the sole mode for teaching and learning in many Nigerian higher education institutions. Lecturers adopted the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) for engaging university learners in online teaching and learning, using various ICT platforms such as Canvas,

Cisco Webinar, Email, Facebook groups, Google suite (Google meet, Google classroom), Moodle, Telegram, WhatsApp, Learning Management System (LMS), Microsoft teams, and Zoom among others (Cueva & Inga, 2022; Oguguo, Ezechulwu, Nannim, & Offor, 2023; Purike & Aslan, 2025) . At present, however, there are little or no generalised agreement on the extent to which online learning should be integrated for online assessment and instructional delivery . These platforms have the ability not only of closing the gap between university learners and their instructors, thus facilitating interactions between both groups without physical contact, it has also resulted in the proliferation of the hybrid method of teaching and learning in traditional universities .

Hybrid mode which includes the addition of the online method to the traditional teaching method has become the order of the day for the teaching and learning of university students in the new Nigerian post COVID19 and fuel subsidy removal reality. Quality standards of the face to face, traditional method of teaching are already standardised and institutionalized, quality delivery of online learning aspect of teaching and learning too is paramount. This is to ensure that worthwhile knowledge needed to be functional in this knowledge based society is acquired. It is also pertinent to assess policy provisions that will enable formidable effective online learning environments for university learners and thus effectiveness of the institutions. It is against this backdrop that the essay narrates the available quality assurance policies of online learning environment (specifically in universities), in order to ensure that education dispensed to this population within society is quality education; the only type that can aid the achievement of the goals of education for that category of learners, which is also in line the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically goal four- the promotion of quality education. Achievement of quality education will in turn enhance the achievement of some of the other SDG goals. In order to achieve the foregoing, the following research questions were raised:

i. What does resilient online learning environment mean for university learners in Nigeria?

ii. Which quality assurance policies exist for online education of university learners in Nigeria?

iii. How are the available online quality assurance policies used to support delivery and maintenance of quality online teaching and learning in Nigeria?

METHODOLOGY

The desk research approach was adopted for this study. The population comprised all students in Nigerian Universities. Data were sourced from interviews with Heads of University Internet, Online services units and secondary materials through scientific databases and websites of universities and relevant government agencies.

Information from practice experiences of the author were also utilised. These were analysed using narrative analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The study was hinged on the Open Systems Theory of Ludwig Von Bertalanfy (1968). The theory stipulates that, a system is characterized by interactions of components to form a whole, these components interact with each other, at the same time interact with components outside the whole. The components interact with each other on the basis of input- throughput/ process- output- outcomes. The theory maintains that an organisation such as the university does not exist in isolation. The Open System is not only connected to the environment but is part of the larger system; society or economic system, to which it belongs. The systems approach encompasses both the interpersonal and group behavioral aspects leading to a system of cooperation (Akinola, 2012). It explores the fact that organisations must be viewed as a whole, considering the interrelationships among their parts and the relationship such shares with the external environment. This approach sees educational institutions as unified, purposeful organisations engaged in the use of inputs, throughput or process to achieve the output. It sees educational institutions as a whole rather than separate units. This is due to the belief that the activity of any part of the educational system goes on to affect that of every other part within the system and beyond as they are dependent on each other. Here, to achieve quality delivery of university education, ideal online environment needs to be priotised to ensure effectiveness.

The components and the whole they form can be likened to the university system, where an individual university comprises University management, different departments, Faculties/ Colleges, which have their own staff and students. The components of management, teachers, and learners, interact through the online teaching and learning processes with the quality assurance policies to guide provision and receipt of quality education.

Globally, the use of online teaching and learning is not new. It has been used for decades by institutions, for the training of university learners, particularly marginalized and vulnerable adult university learners who had missed out of the traditional face to face, formal education for one reason or the other in the form of distance learning. Distance learning entails the delivery of knowledge, skills and attitudes through the use of Information Communication Systems (ICT); by students to study in different places at the same time (Gedviliene & Vaiciuniene, 2016; Kulal, Dines, Abhishek, & Achan, 2024; Kayi, 2024) or the use of ICT by students and teachers who are physically separate from each other (Gedviliene & Vaiciuniene, 2016; Culduz, 2024). Distance learning employs internet online resources in one way or two way modes using audio and video at the same time or

separately. Learning through distance learning could be synchronous or real time where the teacher teaches and the learners learn at the same time in their different spaces. Distance learning also employs the asynchronous form of learning where learning materials had been pre-loaded using ICT media and learners learn at their own different times in their various spaces. Distance learning has been found to be useful for enabling young adults who dropped out of school before concluding secondary education to obtain diplomas in Luxembourg. It has also created opportunities of a new lease of life for young adults in vulnerable situations and at risk of social exclusion in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Scotland and Spain (Beblavý, Baiocco, Kilhoffer, Akgüç, & Jacquot, 2019). According to Gedviliene and Vaiciuniene (2016), online distant education is used to solve social challenges of major emigration flows of young adults, providing them with better employment opportunities and self-realization. Distance learning for life long opportunities is different from the online learning of university students, that is, the focus of this study.

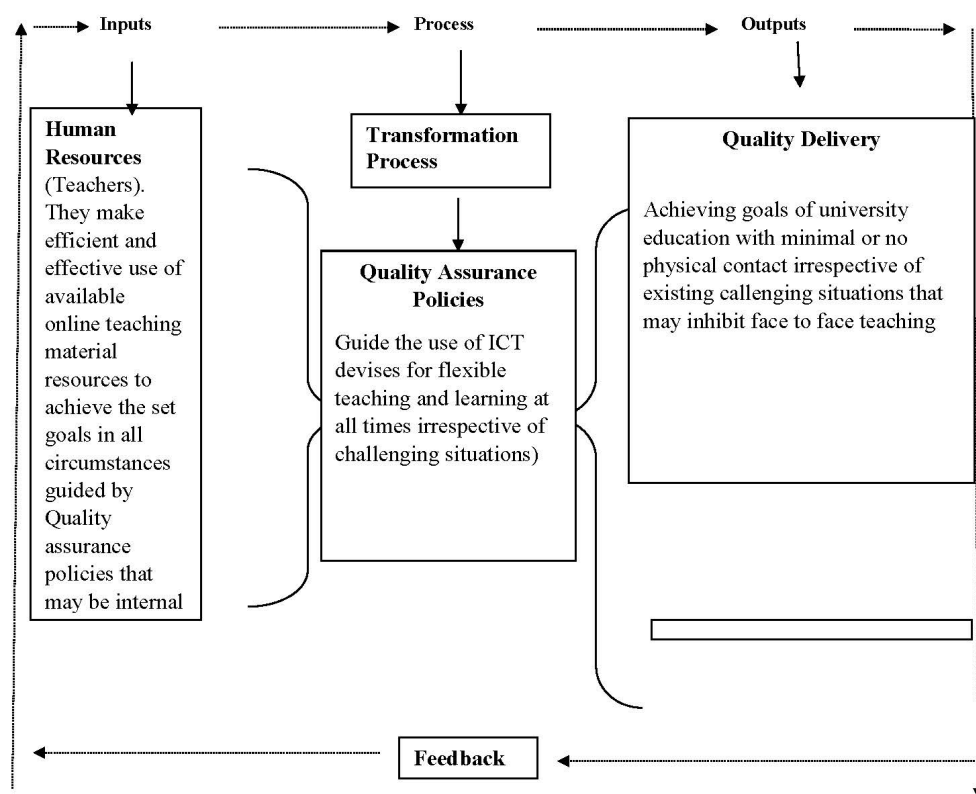**Ideal Resilient Online Learning Environment and Quality Delivery in Universities**

Figure 1
Ideal Resilient Online Learning Environment and Quality Delivery in Universities
Source: Researcher developed, (2025)

It is no longer news that COVID 19 and its attendant issues have caused a new norm of online teaching and learning to be established in teaching and learning processes of young adults across the world, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, where such mode of learning was hitherto uncommon. Since the pandemic has come to stay and processes of education of young adults, especially in universities had to continue, this mode was adopted, especially for large classes to serve as a preventive measure to the spread of the disease, and elongation of the COVID 19 pandemic. In addition, the attendant economic pressures resulting from the total petroleum products subsidy removal in Nigeria reinforced the use of this teaching method.

Research has shown that many benefits can be gained from the use of online learning (Beblavý *et al.*,2019; Adebakin, Aliyu, & Ayanlowo, 2021; Culduz, 2024; Addam, 2025; Purike & Aslan, 2025). These include:

The flexible nature of online learning

This should give learners in the University, the opportunity to acquire useful skills or responsibilities such as marriage, to juggle obligations with school and manage expenses resulting from the hiking of fuel prices better. Especially for adult learners specifically, flexible scheduling is one of the identifiable benefits of learning digitally. Many online degree programmes give learners the opportunity to have access to 24 hours learning

materials and the opportunity to communicate with other reputable learners, and instructors online via emails and and other digital platforms. After the advent of COVID 19 pandemic students have become adapted to online learning, especially as the resources available on site within the campus are also available digitally. Therefore, paving the way for equitable online learning opportunities, which gives learners the opportunity to work and study with little or no class interruptions.

Online learning offers personalised learning

Online learning has a lot of advantages, one of the prominent advantages of online learning is the availability of diverse materials digitally, that are made available online when compared to the traditional classroom lectures, where resources are accessed physically. Online learning platforms give access to instructional resources such as videos, textbooks, digital guides to discussion forum, webinars and information graphics. Varieties of options for learning course materials gives learners in the university the opportunity to personalise their learning experience. Online learning allows users to interact and collaborate with other students and instructors, giving them the opportunity to revisit books, concepts, and explore different ideas, identifying similarities and differences for better understanding, such as affinity mapping, which aids better understanding of subject and accurate knowledge of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)

Online learning improves access to and affordable education

The challenges of financial constraints remain one of the challenges faced by most learners in completing their degrees successfully. Especially considering the fact that tuition campus-based programme often come with extra school fees, accommodation charges, textbooks purchase, and transportation costs, which according to observations and the researchers experiences in Nigeria, have been exacerbated by the removal of fuel subsidy.

Online education has the potential to help learners in the university manage their expenses, therefore reducing cost spent on transportation, physical textbooks, and the expenses of getting a degree in general. It gives equal access to both young and old due to its flexible nature (Onyenemezu, 2008; Pal, 2025).

Online learning helps university learners to boost degree attainment rates

Earning a degree can be demanding, especially in a setting where physical schooling is mandated. Whereas, the challenges of working, managing a family and also schooling at the same time can be more demanding. However, online learning will eventually help to be a leeway to this herculean task due to the potential it has, to ease the chances of completing degrees without much stress.

Online learning enhances better career prospects

Without mincing words, secondary education is very vital and meaningful but university education is more relevant especially as it offers a better career opportunity for individuals who desire to acquire it. Availability of university education digitally gives room for flexibility and accessibility of professional training programmes, resources and degrees, using the online mode. Skills that are relevant to these changing society can be acquired and used effectively , enhancing positive and meaningful outputs. According to findings carried out by researchers, certification of skills, professional development and knowledge has shown to be essential for advancement and employment in the rapidly changing workforce (Doorly, 2018; Jafarov, 2025). Online learning is the pathway to acquire the tools and abilities for new positions and careers. The benefits of online learning do not seem to be depreciating. In fact, online delivery modes for degree programmes seem poised to become even more powerful, especially as new innovative technologies, from virtual reality to artificial intelligence, are produced with the potential to enhance learning opportunities.

Requirements for quality delivery of resilient online learning for University Students in Nigeria

It is unequivocal that the pandemic which ravaged the entire world has had great impact on the continuity of education. As such, it affected education at all levels and across nations. Education, because of the vital position it holds for economic, national and individual development, should not be hindered for any reason whatsoever. Ensuring that learners who have returned to schools which are public spaces, are retained in good health and also able to continue their education irrespective of existing circumstances, in order to achieve the goals of education, provision should be made to curtail and contain the spread of COVID19 and all other health and economic hazards. Also policies should be formulated to ensure that best practices are utilised in the provision and utilisation of materials that will enhance the delivery of resilient education. The under listed are some of the essential materials to be provided by university administration, guided by quality assurance policies.

Provision of adequate digital infrastructure

Digital infrastructure are very essential for digitalisation of university education and learning. These infrastructure which include computers, internet and learning application software among others, should be adequately provided in order to ensure sustainability of digital learning for university learners in the country. Achieving this may require adjusting the university curriculum to incorporate digital contents into every discipline and subject areas. This implies that availability of digital facilities would be a fundamental criterion for university programme accreditation. Also, adequate digital knowledge would be

considered essential for recruiting university academic staff. This should be done with a mandate to make university education flexible and accessible to all and sundry wherever, and at any anytime.

In addition, students with special needs should not be left out. Learning technological facilities based on their peculiarities should be provided because they are more likely to be disadvantaged at accessing e-learning. As a result, these set of learners need assistive technologies, which can improve communication and enhance learning for individuals with specific disabilities.

Guaranteed access to digital infrastructure

Sequel to provision of digital infrastructure for sustainable digitalisation of learning, is guaranteed access to the infrastructure. It is instructive to note that digital infrastructure can only be used for teaching and learning purposes if access is guaranteed for both students and staff. Of the basic digital amenities required for digitalization of academic activities of university students, is quality internet facility. Access to quality internet, computers and other digital resources is a right step in the right direction which can promote sustainable digitalisation of learning. As a result, educational challenges such as disruption of academic calendar and learning interruption as witnessed by Nigerian university students at the peak of the pandemic could be resolved.

Another part of efforts to guarantee access to digital infrastructures is to ensure that disadvantaged students are catered for. Although, evidence has shown that disadvantaged students are less likely to have access to digital facilities (Doorly, 2018). Governments should increase access to digital facilities by reducing the costs of internet connectivity and computers (laptops, or tablets) for disadvantaged households so that students from such background will not be left out.

Regular power supply

Provision of uninterrupted power supply is another pivotal factor to be considered in order to ensure sustainable resilient university education in Nigeria. Effective use of digital facilities for learning at higher levels is a function of stable power supply. While the government is making all efforts to provide stable power, it is important for Nigerian Universities to complement the government by inventing innovations that will generate power through their various research activities and projects, thereby providing solutions to the problem of irregular power supply in the institutions and their immediate communities as well (Nzeneri, 2010).

Support for Academic Staff

Academic staff are important human components of the teaching-learning processes of university learners. As such, they need to be given adequate support in terms of training and workshop attendance. This will enable them to quickly adapt to the requirements for digital needs and be able to communicate online with students through effective use of Microsoft, Google and other educational tools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Question 1: What does resilient online learning environment mean for University Learners in Nigeria?

Resilient online learning environment for University Learners in Nigeria, means the use of online based platforms such as Google classroom, WhatsApp, Telegram and Zoom to replicate the physical classroom for young adult learners. Instructors/ Academic Staff use any or a combination of these platforms to design, store and pass on lesson content when it is impossible or difficult to do so using the traditional face to face approach. The platforms are accessed from various gadgets such as mobile phones, i pads and laptops. The lecture content can be passed to the young adults asynchronously and synchronously, where lectures are participatory and interactive.

Research Question 2: Which quality assurance policies exist for online education of University Learners in Nigeria?

Nigerian Universities have formal general quality assurance policies for the education of Learners who are students of these institutions but there are no formal written quality assurance policies for online teaching and learning in traditional universities. Each institution doles out suggestions that may be followed for online teaching and learning.

Research Question 3: How are the available online quality assurance policies used to support delivery and maintenance of quality online teaching and learning of young adults in Nigeria?

There are no hard and fast rules about suggestions that are made to guide online teaching and learning. In the two universities where the author has been privileged to work, Lecturers were trained, though in different ways in order to get familiar with the technology to be used for online teaching and learning, the different platforms that can be used and the types of modes that can be adopted for lesson delivery.

In the first University, a Federal University, Lecturers were batched together according to Faculties in one of the large cloud rooms in the Computer Centre, they were trained on the various platforms available, the training was hands on where participants at the workshop had to practice what they were taught to ensure proper understanding. Questions were asked and answered by the facilitators of the programme. At the end of the training, Lecturers were provided with phone numbers that could be called if there were any problems with using the online platforms.

Last year, in the federal university, at the instance of the National Universities Commission, a group of technical experts who were into the business of technology were referred to train selected Academic staff on the use of online technology for teaching and learning using a form of the e board. Members of staff who attended the programme, where the facilitators were online commented that it was not necessary as it was just undertaken to promote the business of some people, not considering the peculiarities of the university. It was recommended after the programme, that university experts on the field should replicate such a workshop, incorporating the peculiarities of the university in it. Till, now, this has not been undertaken.

In the second university, a State institution, lecturers were trained in batches too but the management of the institution went a step further in the maintenance of quality assurance. All teachers were asked to create course content to be loaded in the form of power points that reflected the objectives of courses taught, the course content loaded were monitored to confirm that they were well organised . All teachers were compelled to invite the Head of Department to all online classes in the wake of COVID 19 but subsequently, even considering the economic reality resulting from withdrawal of fuel subsidy in the country, nothing was done in terms of quality assurance of online teaching and learning.

Available Online Quality Assurance Policies in Nigeria

Nigerian universities possess different umbrella quality assurance processes which are external and internal. The external quality assurance policies are initiated by the National Universities Commission (NUC), a recognised regulatory body for university education in Nigeria. To ensure quality assurance of university programmes, the NUC undertakes a peer review accreditation of the universities where programmes, carrying capacities, quality and quantity of academic and non-academic staff, resources, facilities, admission criteria and other factors are assessed against already set standards. This is done every five years for a programme that clinches full accreditation. Failure in accreditation means it will be repeated after a year. If full accreditation is not attained for a programme, students of the programme who graduate will not be able to proceed for the one year mandatory post university service to the country. Internal quality assurance policies are formulated and established by individual universities with a focus on NUC benchmarks as guideline.

How are the available online quality assurance policies used to support delivery and maintenance of quality online teaching and learning in Nigeria?

In the federal University, there is no obvious monitoring of online teaching and learning activities. Lecturers can choose to use any platform, synchronously or asynchronously but in the case of the State University, all Lecturers must have given prior notice of online classes to the Head of Department who is invited to the classes. It is also compulsory that on line teaching and learning activities must be synchronously presented. This shows that though both universities do not have formal documents for quality assurance policies of online learning, the state university monitors the processes more for assurance and maintenance of quality.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that though both Universities do not possess formal documents for quality assurance policies, the state university had a better way of managing and maintaining quality of online teaching and learning of university students, which could be emulated by the federal institution, though there is still a lot of room for improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that all universities should draw up formal, documented online quality assurance policies that will be given to all Academic Staff. Online teaching and learning activities should also be monitored to ensure strict compliance with the policies, so as to attain quality resilient online education.

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