Challenges Of Virtual Classes On Students' Academic Performance In Selected Secondary Schools In Ilorin Metropolis

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Abstract. *The coronavirus pandemic made it practically impossible for physical classes to take place in 2020 but thanks to virtual classes which came to our rescue. This study investigated the challenges of virtual classes on students' academic performance in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara state. The study used descriptive survey method. The population of the study comprised all the 367 academic staff of the selected secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis where 122 SSS3 teachers were purposively selected. Questionnaire and proforma were used to garner the needed data, where the questionnaire was validated and reliability coefficient of 0.71 was stablished using the split-half method. The study revealed amongst others poor or no autonomous/compulsory reading, difficulty in supervision, copying among the students, power/battery issues, absence online, and technical issues. The study then recommended amongst others that school administrators, government and all stakeholders in education should help to reduce digital divide and that students should learn with the growing or evolving technology.*

Keywords *: Perceived-Challenges; Virtual Classes; Academic Performance; Secondary Schools*

Abstrak. *Pandemi virus corona membuat kelas fisik hampir tidak mungkin diadakan pada tahun 2020, tetapi berkat kelas virtual yang datang untuk menyelamatkan kami. Studi ini menyelidiki tantangan kelas virtual pada kinerja akademik siswa di kota metropolis Ilorin negara bagian Kwara. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode survei deskriptif. Populasi penelitian terdiri dari 367 staf akademik sekolah menengah terpilih di metropolis Ilorin di mana 122 guru SSS3 dipilih secara sengaja. Kuesioner dan proforma digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data yang dibutuhkan, dimana kuesioner divalidasi dan koefisien reliabilitas 0,71 ditetapkan dengan menggunakan metode split-half. Studi tersebut mengungkapkan antara lain buruk atau tidak ada membaca mandiri/wajib, kesulitan dalam pengawasan, menyalin di antara siswa, masalah daya/baterai, ketidakhadiran online, dan masalah teknis. Studi tersebut kemudian merekomendasikan antara lain bahwa administrator sekolah, pemerintah dan semua pemangku kepentingan dalam pendidikan harus membantu mengurangi kesenjangan digital dan bahwa siswa harus belajar dengan teknologi yang berkembang atau berkembang.*

Kata kunci *: Persepsi-Tantangan; Kelas Virtual; Prestasi akademik; Sekolah Menengah*

INTRODUCTION

Generally, coronavirus had disrupted life around the globe in all aspects since 2020. As it is in any other sector, the COVID-19 pandemic affected education in many ways, including academic session. Government actions have followed a common goal of reducing the spread of coronavirus by introducing measures limiting social contact. Many countries, Nigeria inclusive suspended face-to-face teaching/classes and or exams for students. Since then, online learning or e-learning has experienced significant change due to the exponential growth of the internet and information technology usage (Biasutti, 2017) new e-learning platforms are being developed for tutors to facilitate teaching and learning. In Nigeria however, it was only Lagos state that conducted online classes via television

programs. But the questions were; how many parents have televisions? How many parents had light to watch the program given the epileptic situation of light in the nation? In Kwara state for instance, no such program was made available by the state government, meaning all state government owned schools were not into teaching and learning of whatever form during this period (except if there were personal/private arrangements). However, some private schools within the state (private schools) did the online classes for their students. This was aimed at keeping the learners abreast and especially the examination classes' students awake and ready for their exams (WAEC and NECO as well as JSSCE).

Fortunately, there are range of modern alternative tools available to face the challenge of online learning imposed necessitated by COVID-19 pandemic (Biasutti, 2017). Using these tools, the modification of contents that were previously taught face-to-face is easily conceivable. Various e-learning platforms enable interaction between teachers and students, however, these schools opted for the Whatsapp, Telegram due to its economic nature and less difficulties for their teaching learning program. However, there are other important tasks in the learning process, such as assessment or autonomous learning that can still be challenging without the direct supervision of teachers and or assists of their class mates. Again, some students comprehend faster with their mates or what their mates explain to them which Is not feasible online. Also, the challenges of network, data, light to power phones, ability to use efficiently the platform to answer questions and or carry out the assigned tasks, among other challenges were assumed to have caught up with the students as their performances in the WAEC exams (which they wrote using online learning) and NECO (which they wrote with conventional learning method) had greater differences. As most of the teachers complained that not that they failed but the pass rate was not encouraging as it was below efforts, energy, time and resources used.

Traditionally, there are several reasons or factors that contribute to students' poor academic performance in school, ranging from poor teaching, distance to school, school environment nature and or quality of teachers, among others as it is natural and undeniable that even before the coronavirus pandemic that resulted to online learning, some students have been performing poor.

Others may argue that they would have gained experiences or WAEC and NECO differs but the teachers are left unconvinced and are of the perception that the online classes in a way or the other may have caused it.

Statement of the Problem

Students' performance is a general concern for both parents, teachers, school administrators and all stakeholders in education. It is never the wish of any teacher to fail a students or for his students to fail and same is applicable to the parents as they expect transition and progress from their wards after every term, semester, academic year or session. It was observed that the performance of the students in some private schools in Ilorin metropolis were not up to expectation compared to the efforts, energy, resources, time and everything put in by the staff. All hopes were high as usual as it has always been the culture of these schools that students pass exceedingly well, even without the aid or help of their teachers but the result, though no failure recorded, did not meet most teachers' expectations. There were differences in the results when put aside subjects by subjects and when the average pass marks were been collated by the school management.

See the 2020 WAEC and NECO result summary as compared below:

S/NO.	SUBJECT (S)	WAEC PASS PERCENTAGE	NECO PASS PERCENTAGE	PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE
1	Mathematics	79%	100%	21%
2	English Language	89%	94%	5%
3	Civic education	100%	100%	0%
4	Catering Practice	80%	100%	20%

5	Marketing	86%	96%	10%
6	Garment-making	85%	100%	0%
7	Dying & bleaching	100%	100%	0%
8	Chemistry	100 %	100 %	0%
9	Biology	80%	100%	20%
10	Physics	49%	96%	45%
11	Agricultural Science	100%	100%	0%
12	Technical drawing	100%	100%	0%
13	Further Mathematics	100%	100%	0%
14	Geography	88%	88%	0%
15	Computer Science	100%	100%	0%
16	Financial Accounting	100%	100%	0%
17	Commerce	100%	100%	0%
18	Economics	93%	100%	7%
19	Government	64%	100%	36%
20	Christian Rel. Studies	90%	100%	10%
21	Literature	100%	100%	0%
22	Yoruba	78%.	100%	22%

Compared WAEC and NECO results from one of the selected schools

This discrepancy in performance may be as a result of some challenges like poor or no monitoring, no autonomous reading, poor network, epileptic power supply, data/subscription issue, absence from classes as and many others.

Several researches have it that some students have no effective access to the online teaching due to lack of either the means or the instruments due to economical and digital divide (UNESCO, 2020). This would hamper or distort your performance in examination. In a study, the challenges of learning were including loss of interest, non-availability of internet to students live in provincial and rural areas, speed and cost of internet hinder proper delivery of study materials by both students and teachers, non-availability of learning devices such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones devices to access the internet and view the online materials, the shortness of the available time to solve the online tests, which causes panic, lack of application in the clinical setting for the things we learned from book, lack of or inability to teach the practical lessons or subjects in online basis, at times, spending long time in online learning makes the students loss their motivation to participate, also they feel tired with sleeping issues, less interactive due to no contact between students, teachers which makes it very boring and easily lose concentration, lack of effective communication as some students have the sense of loneliness (Mohammed, 2020).

Several challenges and deficiencies abounds with respect to online classes in a country like ours, ranging from digital divide to financial problems and network problems, electricity problems, to mention but a few. Rashmi (2020) outlined some deficiencies in the online mode of learning such as lack of human connect, absence of opportunities of collaborative learning, teacher supervision and the most glaring being lack of opportunities for hands-on learning in complex subjects such as science and mathematics. Besides, amid the rush of hosting online classes the best teaching practices such as

addressing learners Multiple Intelligences (MI), Learning Styles and providing a differentiated learning experience have been relegated to the backburner. Bad Wifi or network, high cost of subscription or remote learning and dishonesty were also observed as challenges by Mendoza (2020). Again, Anu (2020) also stated some of the virtual classes' challenges as including adaptability, technical issues, computer knowledge, time management, distractions, self-motivation, teaching/learning styles, communication, virtual engagement/feedback, time commitment, assessment/fear of cheating, amongst others. Also, the issue of learner differences, special needs students, and many more are always been encountered during online classes, especially in a country like ours.

Other challenges observed include distraction from other virtual material sources or distraction from their friends as well as overexposure due to lack of or poor parental monitoring and some parents are using same phones or sharing phones with their wards which to an extent distract them whenever there is a call or the father has to step out of the house for a reason or the other. Again, it was observed some wee helped with their home or class works as it was evident when they find it difficult to perform the answers earlier due to no monitoring. Consequently, the discrepancies in the above results has called for or has prompted this study.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to assess Challenges of virtual Classes on Students Academic Performance in Selected Secondary Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. Accordingly, the specific objectives are;

a. to examine causes of challenges of virtual classes on students' performances; and
b. to compare the differences in the performances of students during and after virtual classes

Research Questions

This research study addressed the following research questions.

a. What are the causes of virtual classes' challenges among students in selected secondary schools in Ilorin?
b. What are differences in the performances of students during and after virtual classes in selected secondary schools in Ilorin?

METHODOLOGY

The study used the descriptive survey method. Daramola (2006) describe the descriptive research survey as the systematic attempt to describe the characteristics of a given population or areas of interest factually; it look s critically at a phenomena and describes the way it is. That is, it enables and allows researchers to determine and report phenomena the way they are. To that end, the researcher then consider the survey type as most suitable for this study because it would avail the researcher the opportunity to describe accordingly the concept under study. The population of the study comprises all the 387 academic staff of selected private secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State. The needed sample of 122 teachers would be purposively drawn from SSS3 teachers of selected private schools in Ilorin metropolis since they were the ones that involved in virtual classes. This is because they were the persons involved in the virtual classes teaching in the stipulated time.

The instrument for the collection of data for this study was questionnaire which was distributed to elicit information from the respondents. The questionnaire was a two response structured questionnaire with YES or NO response. The instrument was validated via the appropriate quarters and a reliability coefficient of 0.76 was using split-half method was established. The study also used proforma to get the students' performance during and after the online classes from one of the schools. The questionnaires were distributed to the various respondents and collect back immediately. The proforma was taken to the school management to garner the needed data on students' performance. The data collected for this study were analysed using descriptive statistics. Spearman rank order was used for answering of research questions raised as the challenges were ranked from highest to lowest as responded by the teachers while the secondary data gotten from the proforma was presented using bar graph.
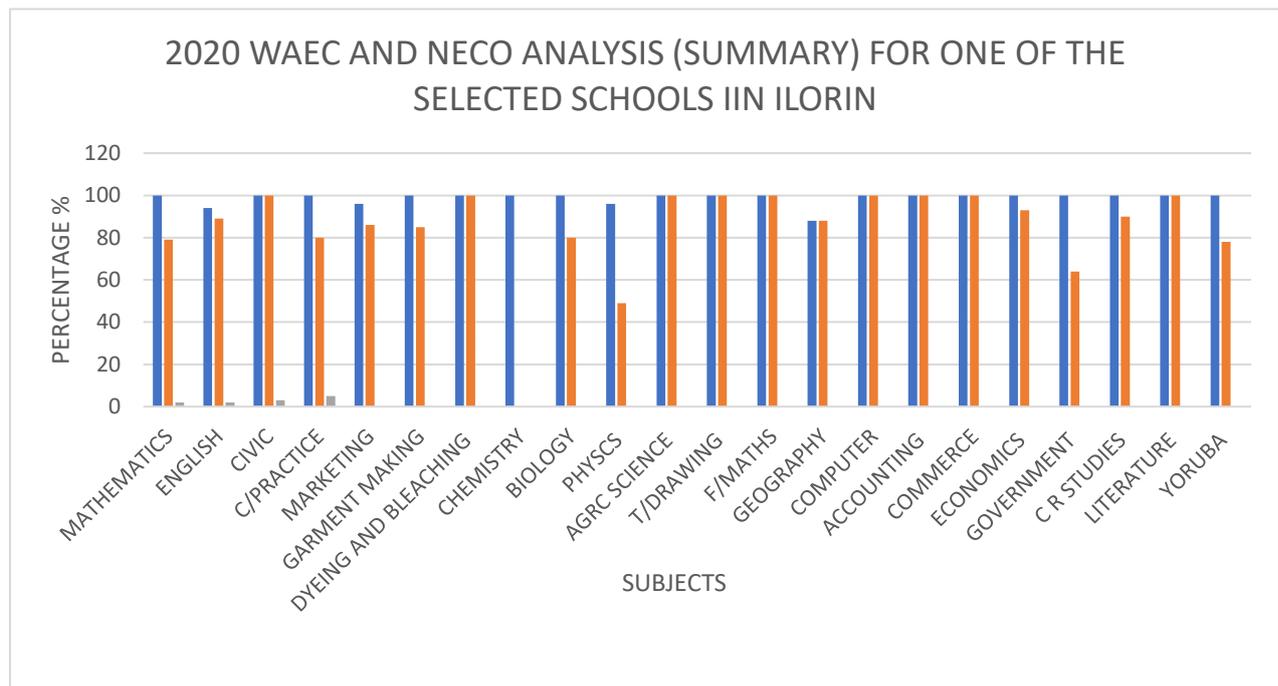
RESULT

Teachers' Perception of On-line classes as cause of difference in Students' Performance

ITEM(S)	YES (%)	NO (%)	Position
Some students were not always present for the online classes	101(82.8)	21 (17.2)	2ND*
Teachers were not able to monitor the exercise given to the students	98(80.3)	24(19.7)	5TH*
Some students complained of flat battery or no light to charge their phones	79(64.8)	43(35.2)	9TH*
Other students were suspected to have been distracted by other online activities	101(82.8)	21(17.2)	2ND*
Poor network or no subscription were also reported by some students	74(60.7)	48(39.3)	11TH*
Some of the students were suspected to have copied themselves or been assisted by other persons	89(73)	33(27)	7TH*
There was no way to ensure autonomous or compulsory reading on the students	99(81.1)	23(18.9)	4TH*
Some students reported of their parents going out with their phones	86(70.5)	36(29.5)	8TH*
Some students reported inability to understand some of the practical concepts	79(64.8)	43(35.2)	9TH*
There were issues of poor or no timing in submission from some students	103(84.4)	19(15.6)	1ST*
Some students complained of boringness or loneliness during or no interaction	69(56.6)	53(43.4)	12TH*
Some students were noticed to only come online to mark attendance	96(78.7)	26(21.3)	6TH*

Not a cause of difference in students' performance =0 – 27%,
A cause of difference in students' performance = 0-73%

The table above shows the perceptions of teachers towards online classes on differences in students' performances. As shown in the result, the perceptions of teachers towards online classes on students' performances were that: monitoring was not as possible as in physical classes, some students were absent from some classes due to electricity, poor network, distractions, no autonomous reading, boringness, parents going out with phones, poor compliance in submission of work, inability to understand some concepts, copying others, and so on and so forth which made it difficult for them to do what they were supposed to or would have done. Below is a multiple bar graph with summary analysis of the students' performances in one of the selected schools in Ilorin metropolis:

2020 WAEC AND NECO ANALYSIS (SUMMARY) FOR ONE OF THE SELECTED SCHOOLS IIN ILORIN

From the above result summary, it is evident clear that the NECO exams was by far better than the WAEC result of the students and it can therefore be inferred that online classes did have effects on the students' performances in their WAEC exams. The total percentage pass of the students for WAEC was 45.45% while the percentage pass of the students for NECO was 81.81% (approximately 88%). That is an improvement with a difference of 36.35%. Contrariwise, it can be said that the online teaching challenges affects the students' performances as their performances were better with 36.36% difference in the exams. Although other factors may have been agued to have played in but holistically and statistically, the students; results when they had physical classes was better than that which they wrote using online classes.

DISCUSSION

The study examined *"Challenges of Virtual Classes on Students' Academic Performance in Selected Secondary Schools in Ilorin Metropolis"*. The result of this study revealed that the perceptions of teachers towards the differences in students' performance during and after the virtual classes were that: monitoring was not as possible as in physical classes, some students were absent from some classes due to electricity, poor network, distractions, no autonomous reading, boringness, parents going out with phones, poor compliance in submission of work, inability to understand some concepts, copying others, and so on and so forth which made it difficult for them to do what they were supposed to or would have done. This result corroborates the findings of Anu (2020), Rashmi, (2020) UNESCO (2020) and Mohammed (2020) all of which outlined challenges to virtual learning as including bad Wifi, technical issues among others. For instance, UNESCO identified economic issues and digital divide as challenges of virtual classes, while   Anu outlined adaptability, technical issues, computer knowledge, time management, distractions, self-motivation, teaching/learning styles, communication, virtual engagement/feedback, time commitment, assessment/fear of cheating, amongst others. Also, the issue of learner differences, special needs students are some of the challenges of virtual learning.

All the above factors or challenges and many more are tenable in this study as perceived by the teachers of the selected schools during their interaction with the learners in the course of teaching and learning during the virtual classes and this also justifies the reason for the differences in their performances as shown in their WAEC (written during virtual classes) and NECO (written after virtual classes or during physical classes) examinations.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it can be inferred that the online classes affected the students' performances as perceived by their teachers and as the NECO result of one of the selected schools was better than their WAEC result. This was attributed to the inability of some of them to interact physically with their teachers and or mates, poor or no monitoring during the teaching learning process, poor network and other factors. Accordingly, online classes are good but they also have hitches that must be duly and seriously checkmated, especially for the secondary school students. Again, this spell of online learning is going to leave principals and educators and other education stakeholders richer in terms of insights into what constitutes quality education and their own preparedness to deliver it. The challenges of quality online classes will also be managed sooner than later due to the inherent availability of learners to use the available mediums. Although, the real challenge may not be addressed by many school administrators given we always want to be reactive rather than been proactive.

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