

## **Business Educators' Ratings on the Constraints to Effective Online Teaching in Universities in the South East, Nigeria in the New Normal Environment**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The empirical study on Business Educators' ratings on the constraints to online teaching in new normal environment was carried out in the South East States of Nigeria. The general purpose of the study was to determine the Business Educators' ratings of factors constraining online teaching in Universities in the South East States of Nigeria in the new normal environment. Survey research design was utilized for the study. The population comprised 68 Business Educators in the Universities in the South East offering Business Education programme made up of 49 Business Educators from the Federal Universities and 19 Business Educators from the State Universities. Two research questions and two hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance were utilized for the study. A validated instrument by expert s from Enugu State University of Science and Technology was used to elicit information from the respondents. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses. From the result of the analysis, it was revealed that technological constraints such as Business Educators' resistance to new technologies, poor access to internet connectivity constrains online teaching in the new normal environment. The researchers concluded that since online teaching is irresistible in the new normal environment., Business Educators in Universities in the South East of Nigeria have no choice other than to embrace online teaching and brake the barrier of constraining themselves to the walls of the classroom. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended among others that Business educators should upgrade their skills and get fully prepared for the utilization of online teaching in the new normal environment.*

**KEYWORDS:** business education, constraints, online teaching and new normal environment

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Business Education is one of the courses offered in some Universities in the South East States of Nigeria. Business Education as a Vocational Education programme has been defined by various authors and scholars in various ways. Shehu cited by Oduma (2021) defined Business Education as an education for office occupation, distribution and marketing occupation. In line with this

definition, Oduma stated that Business Education houses four academic programmes in the Universities. They include Accounting, Office Technology and Management and Entrepreneurship Education. In some Universities in the South East, it is more than the aforementioned options. Some Universities like Enugu State University of Science and Technology offer Economics Education in addition to the four already mentioned as a programme in Business Education. Irrespective of the option, the students offer general Business Education courses in their first year and second year in the University. Then in their third year, they can major in any of the options mentioned above.

The general aim of the programme is to enable the recipients to acquire saleable skills for office occupation, teaching and entrepreneurial skills to be self-employed. This is in conformity with the opinion of Oduma(2021) that Business Education is one of the Vocational Education courses aimed at equipping its beneficiaries with skills and competencies needed to secure employment in business organizations, offices or to be self-employed. Preparing Business Education students recently for a field of work is too tasking especially in the new normal.

New normal occurs when there is drastic change in the way we do things before. Eko-Nweke, Ezeabii and Ikpeama defined new normal as a state to which an economy, society, education, health and all that concerns human existence settles following a crisis. In the context of this study, new normal refers to the way teaching and learning of Business Education is carried out recently due to the outbreak of COVID-19 Pandemic.

The whole world in 2021 witnessed crises in every sector of the economy with its greatest impact on the education sector due to the pandemic caused by Corona Virus. This led to the shut down of schools across the globe causing crises in the education sector. According to United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2020), for nearly 77 million children, the pandemic has taken away their classrooms. Also, school children worldwide lost 1.8 trillion hours and counting of in-person learning due to COVID-19 lockdown. UNICEF noted that the cost of school closures on students' learning, health and well-being has been devastating. Many Institutions of higher learning in Nigeria notably Private Universities embraced online teaching.

Online teaching refers to a type of teaching and learning situation in which the learner is at a distance from the tutor/instructor and the learner uses some form of technology to access the learning materials. (Norehan, Maslin, Suraya and Safiyyah, 2021). Any teaching and learning via an electronic device is regarded as online or e-learning. According to Abaid, Mahmooda, Shanza and Saijad (2021), online education is a form of education where students use their home computers through the internet and staying away from the academic institution. Despite the adoption of online teaching/learning during COVID-19 recession, Nwokike and Ugwunwoti (2021) observed that

suspension of teaching and learning due to COVID-19 pandemic affected many academic programmes mostly in Universities in the South East States of Nigeria.

South East is one of the Geo-political Zones in Nigeria. They are predominantly Igbo speaking zone. There are five states that made up the South East, they include Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. Each of this State has both private and public Universities. Public Universities are those Universities fully or partly funded by either the Federal or State Government while the Private Universities are those owned, fully funded and managed by individuals or organizations such as the church. Both public and private universities in the South East have their peculiarities and challenges of teaching and learning during COVID-19 Pandemic. Many educators were constrained to a lot of factors in teaching in the new normal environment.

Constraints are obstacles or something that limits someone from making use of something. This is in line with the view of Nwanbikarizer that constraints are those things that restricts someone from performing an act or carrying out certain action. Constraints are challenges encountered by Business Educators in teaching in the new normal environment. Abaid et al (2021) noted that most students do not have access to high speed or reliable internet services and are thus struggling with online learning. By implication, there are lots of constraints to effective online teaching in the new normal environment. For the purpose of this research work, the researchers ex-rayed technological and environmental constraints to online teaching in the new normal.

Technological constraint is associated with the use of technology in teaching and learning. Nwokike and Ugwunwoti (2021) observed that many institutions adopted online teaching without taken into consideration the availability of computers, internet connectivity and the preparedness of Business Educators in terms of technological skills for online teaching. The researchers observed with dismay that the following technological constraints may likely affect teaching of Business Education courses such as Business Educators resistant to change, inadequate professional training, unreliable devices/software and unsteady power supply. The success of online teaching in the new normal environment depends on the availability of quality digital access. Online teaching requires technical infrastructure. Some students resides in remote villages where there is no electricity for online teaching and learning and here environmental challenges comes into focus as a constraint to online teaching in the new normal.

Environmental constraints are the impediments that stem from an area where the students and Business Educators resides or lives. Learning environment is the physical locations, contents and culture where students learn. The environment where the students reside could be a constraint to online teaching and learning in the new normal environment. It is against this backdrop that the

researchers sought to investigate Business Educators' ratings on the constraints to effective online teaching in universities in the South East, Nigeria in the new normal environment.

### **Statement of the problem**

Business Education is a dynamic programme that acquaints the recipients with the saleable skills and competencies needed in the business world. It is pertinent that business Educators and students of the programme should be conversant with the utilization of new technologies in teaching and learning catapulted by COVID-19 Pandemic. The researchers observed that there are lots of constraints to Business Educators' ratings of the technological constraints to effective online teaching in Universities in the South East in the new normal environment. Such as technological and environmental constraints. If these constraints are not identified and adequate measures taken to improve on the identified constraints, the labour hours lost during COVID-19 recession may not likely be covered and this could equally affect the graduates of the programme as they may not be gainfully employed due to lack of relevant skills needed in the innovative business world.

### **Purpose of the study**

The general purpose of the study is to determine Business Educators' ratings on the constraints to effective online teaching in universities in the South East, Nigeria in the new normal environment. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. Business Educators' ratings on the Technological constraints to effective online teaching in Universities in the South East in the new normal environment.
2. Business Educators' ratings of the environmental constraints to effective online teaching in Universities in the South East in the new normal environment.

### **Research Questions**

**The following research questions were posed to guide the study**

1. What are the Business Educators' ratings of the technological constraints to effective online teaching in Universities in the South East in the new normal environment?
2. What are the Business Educators' ratings of the environmental constraints to effective online teaching in Universities in the South East in the new normal environment?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** Significant difference does not exist between the mean ratings of Business Educators teaching in the Federal and State Universities on the technological constraints to online teaching in Universities in the South East in the new normal environment.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of Business Educators teaching in the Federal and State Universities on the environmental constraints to online teaching in Universities in the South East in the new normal environment.

**METHOD**

**Survey** research design was utilized for this study and was carried out in Universities in the South-States of Nigeria. The population for the study comprised 68 Business Educators made up of 49 business Educators from the Federal Universities and 19 Business Educators from the State Universities from the South East States of Nigeria. The instrument for Data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers to determine Business Educators’ ratings on the constraints to online teaching in the Universities in the South East of Nigeria in the new normal environment. A four point rating scale of strongly agree(4), Agree(3), disagree(2)and disagree(1) was used as a response option. Data collected for the study were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while t.test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. For decision to be reached, any mean score equal to or above 2.50 was regarded as agree while any mean below 2.50 was regarded as disagree. Moreover, if the computed t-cal is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05, the null hypotheses was rejected but if higher, was retained.

**Presentation of Data**

**Research question one:** What are the technological constraints to effective online teaching of Business Education courses in the new normal?

**Table 1: Mean ratings of Business Educators on the technological constraints to effective online teaching of Business Education courses in the new normal.**

S/N	Technological constraints to effective online teaching and learning of business education courses in the new normal include	Fed.Uni. Business Educators N=49		State Uni Business Educators N=19		Overall		Dec.
		X1	SD1	X2	SD2	XG	SDG	
1.	Difficulty in integrating new technologies in instructional delivering	3.77	0.42	3.75	0.44	3.76	0.43	Agree
2.	Non availability of automated laboratory	3.52	0.68	3.50	0.69	3.51	0.68	Agree
3.	Business educator’s resistance to change	3.50	0.51	3.50	0.51	3.50	0.50	Agree
4.	Inadequate funding to procure the needed technological equipment	3.58	0.49	3.60	0.50	3.59	0.49	Agree
5.	Dearth of technological machines	3.81	0.39	3.80	0.41	3.81	0.40	Agree
6.	High cost of purchasing hardware	3.73	0.45	3.70	0.47	3.72	0.45	Agree
7.	Inability of business educators to utilize available devices	3.29	0.46	3.30	0.47	3.29	0.46	Agree
8.	High cost of software	2.67	0.66	2.70	0.66	2.68	0.66	Agree
9.	Lack of facility maintenance	3.50	0.51	3.50	0.51	3.50	0.50	Agree
10.	Inadequate professional training	3.60	0.49	3.60	0.50	3.60	0.49	Agree
11	Absence of workshop on new technologies	3.56	0.68	3.60	0.68	3.57	0.68	Agree
12	unsteady power supply	3.79	0.41	3.80	0.41	3.79	0.41	Agree
13	Maintenance of technical support	3.19	0.61	3.20	0.62	3.19	0.60	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.50</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>3.50</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>3.50</b>	<b>0.52</b>	Agree

The result in Table 1 shows that the mean ratings of Business Educators ranges from 2.68 to 3.81. This shows that the respondents agree that the identified 13 items are the technological constraints to effective teaching of business education courses in the new normal environment in Universities in the South-East. The cluster mean of 3.50 attest to it. The low cluster standard deviation of 0.52 obtained from data analysis indicates that the respondents have consensus opinion in their responses to the items.

**Table 2: Summary of t-test analysis on the mean ratings of Federal and State University business educators on the collaborative approaches for teaching and learning of business education in the new normal by experts from universities in South –East**

Variables	N	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std.Error Difference	Dec.
Fed.Uni.Business Educators	49	0.032	66	0.974	0.02917	0.89893	NS
State University Business Educators	19						

The result of the data in Table 2 shows that the t-value at 0.05 level of significance and 66 degree of freedom for the 13 items is 0.032 with a significant value of 0.863. Since the significant value of 0.863 is more than 0.05 level of significant, the null hypothesis is not significant. This means that there is no significant difference with regard to the 13 items on the mean ratings of Federal and State University business educators on the technological constraints to effective teaching of Business Education courses in the new normal environment... Hence the Null hypothesis is not significant.

**Research question two:** What are the environmental constraints to effective online teaching of Business Education courses in the new normal?

**Table 3: Mean ratings of Business Educators on the constraints to environmental constraints to effective online teaching of Business Education courses in the new normal.**

S/N	The following are the environmental constraints to effective online teaching of business education courses in the new normal.	Fed.Uni. Business Educators N=49		State Uni Business Educators N=19		Overall		Dec.
		X1	SD1	X2	SD2	XG	SDG	Agree
1.	No internet access in rural areas	3.79	0.62	3.80	0.62	3.79	0.61	Agree
2.	Absence of electric power supply	3.29	0.61	3.30	0.66	3.29	0.62	Agree
3.	School location	3.13	0.53	3.10	0.55	3.12	0.53	Agree
4.	Environmental degradation	3.31	0.47	3.30	0.47	3.31	0.47	Agree
5.	Lack of access to technology	3.63	0.49	3.60	0.50	3.62	0.49	Agree
6.	Inequality of access to technology	3.42	0.65	3.40	0.68	3.41	0.65	Agree
7.	Crowded classroom	3.04	0.71	3.10	0.72	3.06	0.71	Agree
8.	Poor teaching environment	3.29	0.46	3.30	0.47	3.29	0.46	Agree
9.	Limited area covered by internet connectivity	3.19	0.61	3.20	0.62	3.19	0.60	Agree
10.	Bad weather	2.98	0.79	3.00	0.79	2.99	0.78	Agree
11.	Noisy environment	2.97	0.76	3.00	0.79	2.98	0.76	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.28</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>0.62</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>0.61</b>	Agree

Table 2 shows that the mean ratings of the respondents on the 11 items ranges from 2.98 (Noisy environment) to 3.79(No internet Access). This means that Business Educators from the Universities in the South East perceive the identified items as the environmental constraints to teaching of Business Education courses in the new normal environment. The grand mean of 3.28 attest to it.

**Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis on the mean ratings of Federal and State University Business Educators on the Constraints to effective teaching of Business Education courses in the new normal environment.**

Variables	N	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std.Error Difference	Dec.
Fed.Uni.Business Educators	49	0.347	66	0.945	0.05833	0.83633	NS
State University Business Educators	19						

The result of the data in Table 4 shows that the t-value at 0.05 level of significant and 66 degree of freedom for the 11 items is 0.070 with significant value of 0.945. Since the significant value of 0.945 is more than the 0.05 level of significant, the null hypothesis is not significant. This means that there is no significant difference with the regards to the 11 items on the mean ratings of Business Educators in the Federal and State universities on the environmental constraints to teaching Business Education courses in the new normal environment.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The result of the analysis in Table 1 revealed that dearth of technological machines and difficulty in integrating new technologies in instructional delivery by Business Educators are the major technological constraints to effective teaching of Business Education courses in the new normal environment. Some of the technological gadgets needed for effective online educational delivery were not readily available and the available ones are obsolete. Moreover, the analysis also revealed that Business Educators finds it difficult to integrate new technologies in teaching. This is as a result of lack of technological skills. Achugbue cited by Abdulkadir(2020) opined that Business Education programme would only achieve the goals of teaching if such modern technological teaching aids like computer, electric typewriter, television sets, projectors, internet facilities among others are adequately provided and utilized. Many Business Educators that do not give adequate priority to the provision and utilization of new instructional technology had a serious challenge in online educational delivery in the new normal environment. According to Achugbue in Abdulkadir(2020), the dearth of new technological facilities makes it difficult for Business Educators to engage in effective online teaching in the new normal environment.

The result of the hypothesis in Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of Business Educators in Federal and State Universities on the technological constraints to effective online delivery of Business .The result of the hypothesis collaborates with the findings of Onojetah (2019)who found that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of the responses of Business Educators in the universities and Colleges of Education on the modern instructional technologies for utilization to reform business education curriculum for global competitiveness of the graduates in Edo and Delta states. The closes of the Business Educators in their responses indicates that the technological constraints hinder effective teaching of business education courses irrespective of the institutional ownership in the new normal environment.

Research question 2 Table 3 showed that absence of internet access in the rural areas is the major environmental constraints to online teaching in the new normal in the Universities in the South East States of Nigeria. Most of the Universities offering Business Education programme in the South East are located in the rural areas where there is no electricity. In some institutions where there is electricity, the epileptic power supply is nothing to write home about. Students residing in rural areas were left in online teaching during COVID-19 crises. Generally, challenges encountered during online teaching catapulted by COvID-19 pandemic include higher data



consumption, distraction from neighborhoods, friends and relation, erratic power supply and internet network fluctuations. The identified challenges tallied with the findings of Azzah and Musa (2021) that the highest difficulties faced by participants during online teaching was the weakness of internet connection representing 58.4 percent. The findings are also supported by the findings of Onuotu, Osiah and Allen (2020) that access to internet connectivity, epileptic power supply among others are some of the problems affecting utilization of new technologies in teaching and learning Business education courses in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State. The result of the hypothesis showed that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of Business Educators in the Federal and State universities on the environmental constraints to teaching Business Education courses in the new normal environment. Some of these universities in the South East are located in the rural areas irrespective of the institutional ownership. They encountered similar environmental problems in online teaching irrespective of the institutional ownership. This corroborates with the findings of Nwokike and Ugwunwoti (2021) that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of Federal and State University business educators on the collaborative approaches for teaching and learning of business education in the new normal.

## CONCLUSION

Teaching and learning are no longer constrained to the four walls of the classroom. The use of online teaching is now irresistible in the new normal environment. As educators, we have the obligation of complementing online teaching in the new normal environment with the classroom teaching. It is hoped that the findings of this study would enlighten the various constraints and efforts should be made on how to avert them by the stakeholders in education.

### **Educational implications**

The findings of the study have the following implications

1. Since the use of online teaching is now irresistible in the new normal environment, it implies that Business Educators need to adopt online teaching.
2. Poor internet connectivity and dearth of technological machines are the greatest technological and environmental constraints to online teaching in the new normal, the attention of the government has to be drawn.

### **Recommendations:**

Based on the identified constraints to online teaching in the new normal environment, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should as a matter of urgency address the identified constraints to online teaching especially provision of internet connectivity in both urban and rural areas.
2. Business educators should upgrade their skills and get fully prepared for the utilization of online teaching in the new normal.

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