

## ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIAN EDUCATORS' READINESS FOR ONLINE TEACHING-LEARNING

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### Abstract

*This paper is aimed at assessing Nigerian educators' readiness for online learning in this face of what seems like an unending Covid-19 pandemic and the possibility of any further disruptions to academic activities. The study adopted a survey research design with 519 teachers sampled through an online survey instrument. Findings of the study revealed a high level of teachers' readiness to make courses available for online learning. It also finds a high level of teachers' readiness to establish online channels of communication and conduct assessments for students online. Online learning requires the use of technology; therefore, teachers need to possess basic computer skills for effective online communication and content delivery. The study recommended among others that teachers be supported in the planning and facilitating of online learning through continued training sessions for teachers on the effective use of online learning tools, as well as on the design and facilitation of online learning activities, as this will assist teachers in quickly adapting to new learning environments.*

### Introduction

Nearly every country had to implement nationwide closures of schools and other educational institutions because of the Corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic outbreak, which affected more than 1.57 billion students worldwide, accounting for more than 90 percent of the total enrolled student population. (UNESCO 2020). Specifically in Nigeria, on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Federal Ministry of Education approved the closure of schools affecting over 40 million students throughout the country (Obiakor & Adeniran 2020). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2020), while limiting the spread of the corona virus disease and protecting public health is vital, there runs the risk of precipitating a worldwide learning crisis at all levels of the education system. The Nigerian Education in Emergencies Working Group's report (NEEWG 2020) observes that in reaction to the pandemic's suddenness, humanitarian, and development groups, as well as governments, began implementing a variety of initiatives across Nigeria. However, there are obstacles to implementing a response to COVID 19's effect, one of which being financial needs for employee ability to perform at 100% when working from home. Also, teachers, principals, and other educational personnel who serve as the education sector's frontline workers during this crisis and have demonstrated a high level of commitment and creativity in the face of COVID-19 may have been overlooked in the implementation of interventions in response to COVID-19's impact on the educational sector (UNESCO 2020b). The UNESCO study, 'Supporting Teachers and Education Professionals During Times of Crisis,' urges for teachers and other education personnel to be protected and supported, as well as the recognition of their efforts in response to the present health crisis and beyond. Noting that one of the ways teachers can be protected is by working from home while engaging students with online learning (UNESCO 2020).

When a school closure is required, online learning is a proper and systematic approach to ensuring that students' requirements are met as best as possible. Online learning courses are built over several months (or years) and involve a range of learning styles and resources throughout the course (Olurinola 2020). McAleavy, Gorgen Rodney and Proctor (2020) posits that for online learning to be effective, online teachers must be adept in the same areas as in-person teachers: preparing and delivering well-structured courses (structure), modifying teaching to fit individual needs when appropriate (adaptation), and making accurate and productive use of assessment (assessment) (McAleavy et al. 2020). In transitioning to online learning, it may be unrealistic to expect teachers to transform their entire face-to-face course into an online environment within a short period. Moving face-to-face or mixed courses to wholly

online settings because of COVID-19 is considered Emergency Online Teaching (ERT), rather than creating and delivering an online course, according to Robinson (2020).



No or low connectivity	Emerging connectivity	Full connectivity
Broadcasting the fundamental national curriculum	Asynchronous classrooms with digital online curriculum delivered through mobile phones or other devices, with intermittent teacher-student interactions and attendance reporting	Live online class sessions featuring the whole national curriculum, collaboration between students and teachers, and reporting on student grades and involvement

Emergency Online Teaching entails several challenges and limits that are distinct from standard online course planning and delivery. According to O’Keefe, Rafferty, Gunder, and Vignare (2020), high-quality online courses are often built by cross-functional teams over many months and are meant to deliver immersive, adaptive, and other novel learning experiences.

It should be noted that the focus during online learning should be continuing learning through a streamlined process. The key is to understand that online learning cannot be approached the same way face-to-face classes are approached. This is particularly because, in online learning, there is a need to simplify. In terms of simplify content; simplify processes and simplify expectations. When considering a transitioning to a online learning environment, the administration needs to consider numerous factors to determine among which are (1) what type of learning environment will be structured (synchronous or asynchronous); (2) what classes will be offered; and (3) what additional support will be provided for students.

In this regard, the focus of most governments and educational institutions during COVID-19 pandemic crises has been to ensure learning continuity. This has been accomplished via the use of different technology integration models that vary from no/low to high-tech resources and mechanisms.

Source: UNESCO coalition Technology Blueprint

Figure 1: The 3 stages of a country’s readiness for distance learning, based on the current readiness of an education system.

Many nations will have a mix of distance learning readiness encompassing all three levels, with some schools at the "Full connection" stage, some at the "No/low connectivity" stage, and many schools at the "Emerging connectivity" stage. According to the researchers’ findings and case studies, most of the institutions providing online learning in Nigeria are at the developing connectivity stage, with some state governments catering to the No/low connection regions via the broadcasting of the basic curriculum. A well-designed sequence of online learning, according to McAlevy (2020), would provide regular, diversified chances for the instructor to display 'presence' to students, including evaluation tasks. However, not only is course design, development, and delivery significantly different in emergent settings, but the requirements and resources available to both students and teachers are generally restricted (McAlevy,2020).

Recognizing the current demand on teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNESCO Teacher Task Force in a recent Call to Action expanded on what the duty of teachers’ care means in the context of COVID-19, calling on governments and other key partners to prioritize teachers’ and learners’ health, safety, and wellbeing, include teachers in developing COVID-19 education responses, and provide adequate professional support and training, among other things (UNESCO 2020). The document also stated that in terms of readiness for online learning, the effectiveness of such an approach is conditioned by various levels of preparedness, which include monitoring and evaluation readiness, technological readiness, pedagogical and home-based learning support readiness, and content readiness.

## **Readiness for Online Learning**

The shift by schools from the traditional face to face teaching in response to COVID-19 requires most teachers to move their courses online even though many teachers may not have been adequately prepared for this type of teaching. Most teachers across the globe, especially in low-income countries like Nigeria, have had to find their way through uncharted paths of online learning in the bid to assist students to continue learning. This perhaps they may have done without sufficient guidance, training, support, and resources required for the effective delivery of content. It is normal for teachers to feel more confident when using the traditional teaching strategy (face-to-face teaching method) compared to other methods, but it has become important for teachers at this point to branch out and vary their instruction, push beyond their comfort zone, and offer students varied learning activities and experiences during online learning. According to O'Keefe et al. (2020), study on student, teacher, and institutional preparation for online learning revealed that teachers and institutions need greater assistance in knowing how to successfully plan, create, and deliver high-quality education online. The research emphasizes the importance of this requirement for teachers at institutions serving low-income students, who are expected to be disproportionately impacted by the present crisis due to a lack of access to necessary resources and technology. (O'Keefe et al, 2020) Lederman's (2020) survey on the level of experience instructors had with online teaching prior to the spring shift revealed that half of instructors (50 percent) had some online teaching experience to ease the transition, but that the spring's transition was almost certainly more difficult for the roughly one-third of institutions that offered no or few online courses prior to this spring. According to the findings of a poll done by Bay View Analytics (in Lederman 2020), 56 percent of teachers reported to have employed new teaching approaches. The study's findings also indicated that the procedure had been unpleasant, worrying, and anxiety-inducing, necessitating enormous efforts on the part of teachers.

In the view of the uncertain educational scenario posed by COVID- 19, this study is set out to ascertain Nigerian Educators' readiness for online learning, with the focus on teachers in both private and public school. This has become inevitable not only because of schools' closure due to the pandemic, but also the rise insecurity across the country. The paper examined teachers' readiness level to make course materials available online, establish channels of communication with students and remotely access students learning all of which are indices of readiness for online learning.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised for this study

- 1: What is the Level of Teachers' Readiness to make courses available online for Online?
- 2: What is the Level of Teachers' readiness to establish channels of communication with students during Online Learning?
- 3: What is the Level of Teachers' readiness to conduct assessments and grading for students during Online Learning?

## **Methodology**

The study adopted a survey research design while the population comprised teachers from private and public schools. The sample comprised of 519 teachers who completed the online instrument. In this study, the survey instrument was adapted from the University of Washington's Readiness assessment, which was created to help instructors prepare for the possibility of an interruption to campus operations (for example, a pandemic or extended severe weather).The instrument was created using Microsoft Forms, it consisted of 27 items in four section; section 1 obtains information on respondents Bio-data, section 2 focused on putting course materials online, section 3 seeks information on establishing channels of communication, while section 4 establishes ways to conduct assessment remotely. The instrument was validated with 0.78 reliability coefficient using Cronbach Alpha. The survey was conducted online by sharing the survey links to different teachers' online communities and social media groups, responses from the teachers in such group were solicited. Data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, simple percentage and mean.

## Result

**Research question 1:** What is the level of teachers' readiness to make courses available online?

**Table 1: Teachers Readiness to Make courses Available Online**

S/N	Statements	Yes	No	Remarks
1	I have a computer or laptop at home with the software and Internet connectivity that I utilized remotely.	389 (75%)	130 (25%)	High
2	I have a course website for each of my courses which contains up-to-date course material	215 (41%)	304 (59%)	Low
3	I have a system in place for distributing assignments to my students via my course site.	310 (60%)	209(40%)	High
4	I use audio resources in class and am familiar with how to distribute them online with my students.	315 (61%)	204 (39%)	High
5	I include video resources into my classes, and I know how to share them with my students online.	319 (61.4%)	200 (39%)	High
6	I can pre-record my lecture materials and share them with students online.	378 (73%)	141 (27%)	High
7	I can record and share PowerPoint slides online.	351 (68%)	168 (32%)	High
8	I can schedule course sessions to deliver live lectures.	353 (68%)	166 (32%)	High
9	My normal office/work hours can be taken online.	381 (73.4%)	138 (27%)	High

Table 1 shows that 75 percent of teachers have a computer or laptop at home with the software and Internet connectivity necessary to work remotely, 59 percent have a course website for each course that contains up to date course information, 60 percent have a way to distribute assignments to students online using a course website, 61 percent use audio materials in the classroom and know how to share these with students online, 61 percent use video materials in the classroom and know how to share these with students online, and 61 percent use audio materials in the classroom and In addition, 68 percent agreed that they could schedule course sessions to offer live lectures, and 73 percent agreed that their typical office/work hours could be taken online as well. In total, 89 percent of the items have received high ratings. In other words, teachers' willingness to make their courses available online is implied here.

**Research question 2:** What is the level of teachers' readiness to establish channels of communication with students during online learning?

**Table 2: Teachers Readiness to establish channel of communication with students during online learning**

S/N	Statements	Yes	No	Remark
1	I am prepared to communicate updates, changes, and other relevant information to my students.	488 (94%)	31 (6%)	High
2	I can create channels where students can respond to me.	448 (86%)	71 (14%)	High
3	Students know how to contact me remotely if they have questions.	399 (77%)	120(23%)	High
4	I have a way to facilitate discussions with groups of students remotely.	394 (76%)	125(24%)	High
5	I can create opportunities for students to contact each other and collaborate online.	441 (85%)	78 (15%)	High

Table 2 shows that all the items were rated high. According to this findings, 94 percent of the instructors who participated in the survey were prepared to communicate updates, changes, and other pertinent information to pupils. 86 percent of them can create channels where students can respond, 77 percent indicated that students know how to contact them remotely with questions, 76 percent can facilitate discussion with groups of students remotely, and an astounding 85 percent can create opportunities for students to communicate with one another and collaborate online. This means that there is a high level of educator willingness to build channels of communication with students when they are participating in online learning activities.

**Research question 3:** What is the level of teachers' readiness to conduct assessment for students during online learning?

**Table 3: Teacher's readiness to conduct assessment for students during online learning**

S/N	Statements	Yes	No	Remark
1	I can create quizzes to verify that students understand the material.	432 (83%)	87 (17%)	High
2	My students can submit assignments and participate in online quizzes and assessments.	356 (69%)	163(31%)	High
3	I've developed a system for responding to student work and securely publishing grades online.	359 (69%)	162(31%)	High
4	I can facilitate online presentations by students.	351 (68%)	168(32%)	High
5	I can grade assignments, exams, problem sets, etc. online.	373 (72%)	146(28%)	High
6	I am familiar with the online process for submitting final grades to the appropriate authorities.	352 (68%)	167(32%)	High

As shown in Table 3, teachers can create quizzes to verify that students understand the material, 69 percent of teachers agreed that students can turn in homework and take quizzes and exams online, 69 percent have a way to respond to student work and securely publish scores online, 68 percent of teachers can facilitate student presentations online, 72 percent of teachers can grade assignments, exams, problem sets and other assignments online, and 68 percent of teachers can grade assignments, exams, problem sets and other assignments online. All the items were rated high by the teachers. This indicates that there is a high level of preparedness to perform evaluations for students while they are participating in online learning activities.

### Discussion of Findings

The study finds that teachers' readiness to make courses available online is high. This implies that teachers possess the required prerequisites to make courses available online for students, thus are ready for online learning in that regard. Readiness to put a course online starts with the ability to put content together (design). If attempting to transition from a traditional classroom to an online environment amid a crisis or disruption, a major issue is likely to be simply translating existing course plans into an online course. As a starting point also, existing materials or presentations could be used since the intention is to make courses available for learners. Audio and video content can also be used to enhance online courses using multimedia applications, that can be developed by the teacher or alternatively, it is also possible to use content already developed. These contents can be found in an abundance on free and open content websites such as Khan Academy, Phet Colorado, and materials licensed under the Creative Commons license. O'Keefe et al (2020), argument that teachers and institutions require more assistance in understanding how to effectively design courses is refuted by this finding.

Another finding of the study revealed that teachers' level of readiness to establish channels of communication with students during online learning is high. Creating channels of communication is very important in any type of learning and most importantly in online learning where the instructor is not having a face-to-face conversation with the learners. Students and teachers' interaction are essential quality indicators of online learning and as such a break in communication during online learning because of instructor non-readiness to create such channels can mar the learning process. As a result, online learning should be designed in such a manner that students have opportunities to engage with the teacher, one another, and the course material.

Conducting assessments is an important aspect of any educational process and online learning is not an exemption. The finding of the study also shows that teachers are ready to conduct assessments for students during online learning because of a high percentage recorded in their ability to assess students online. Accurate evaluation of learning, whether online or face-to-face, may be difficult, and assessment in an emergency online teaching scenario requires special considerations. Multiple forms of evaluations should be used to evaluate pupils remotely to give an all-inclusive chance to evaluate learning and performance. Four alternative assessment methods have been identified in literature: focusing on transferable skills outside of the classroom (authentic assessment), involving students in the learning and assessment process (active assessment), assessing learning throughout the learning process rather than at the end (formative assessment), and requiring students to complete work offline or even only online but outside of the Learning Management System (experiential assessment). Student learning is reinforced by these strategies, which also aid instructors in understanding students' application of learning. Additionally, these strategies may help reduce exam

anxiety, environmental anxiety, and cheating behaviors in an online course. For both emergency online instruction and general best practices for online assessment. Crosslin et al. (2020) present an excellent description of the issues and problems, as well as solutions for both emergency online instruction and general best practices for online assessment.

## Conclusion

It may take a while before we fully understand the impact of the sudden shift to online learning has on our educational sector. It is evidently clear from the study that teachers are ready to teach using online learning though there are challenges but such challenges can be overcome.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that teachers be provided adequate support required planning and facilitating online learning through continued training sessions on the use of online learning technologies and the design and facilitation of online learning activities. This will assist teachers in adapting to the new learning environments. Additionally, in the face of the threat of a continued pandemic and other arising issues, it becomes important for teachers, principals, and other stakeholders to collaborate on researching, and systematically evaluating which interventions worked and why, as well as where gaps remain and how they can be addressed, to promote more inclusive and egalitarian educational systems that are adaptable to future challenges while maintaining a high standard of education.

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