

ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF POLITICAL SCIENCE IN THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

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Abstract

In Nigeria, teaching and learning of political science and other subjects and courses depend largely on the traditional method of face-to-face classroom interactions. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the year 2020 necessitated the suspension of this practice as a result of the inability of the students to attend physical classes. Consequently, technology-based online teaching and learning was introduced. However, in the post-pandemic world online teaching and learning have become an integral part of education, and political science is no exception. This paper examines the usefulness of online teaching and learning of political science in the post-pandemic world. It discusses the concepts, nature, importance, and methods of teaching online class resources, benefits and challenges concerning political science. It concludes that the online teaching and learning of political science is crucial to the development of education, therefore, its application should be in constant use in a post-pandemic era. It recommends that the government, stakeholders and parents should encourage the use of online resources by making appropriate resources available for use when and where necessary.

Keywords: Online Teaching and Learning, Political science, Post-Pandemic world.

Introduction

Political science had been taught using the conventional method which requires face-to-face physical interactions between the students and teacher in a physical classroom setting. However, it has become almost impossible to use the method during the COVID-19 pandemic because of restrictions placed on human movements and imposition of social distancing by the Government. Hence, the introduction of a more suitable method of teaching and learning which is technology-based and of does not require physical contact of teacher and students. Hence, the online teaching and learning of political science have become an enduring part of education in the post-pandemic world. Prokhrel & Chhetri (2021) State the use of suitable and relevant pedagogy for online

education depends on the expertise and exposure to information and communication technology (ICT) for both educators and learners. Olusegun (2021) notes that teachers' search and use of technology can make teaching appealing to the senses of learners, raise their interests, encourage their participation, make learning more meaningful and promote academic standards. Yang *et al* (2016) in Mihai, Questier and Zhu (2020) observe that in the context of political science, technology-enabled tools can provide students with a more informal and dynamic environment in contrast to the purely academic one and with efficient tools for social support.

The technology-based teaching includes online teaching among other modes. Online teaching is a virtual, via electronic media, type of teaching activity which involves passing across the subject matter, message or information from the sender (usually the teacher or facilitator) to the receiver (referring to the students or a particular audience). Stern (2004) defines online teaching as the education that takes place over the internet. It is a form of learning where individuals are not physically present in a classroom but rather a type of teaching where instructions and contents are only conveyed primarily over the internet (Thomas and Eryilmaz 2014; Schwirzke, Vashaw and Watson 2018). Online teaching and learning can also be regarded as the educational lecture prepared and delivered to the audience through a suitable platform often referred to as online resources. Akinyemi & Oke (2019) define online resources as web pages and documents on the internet that provide useful information; typically, data and educational. The online process according to Stern (2004), requires both instructors and students to take active roles in such a way that the instructor acts as a facilitator, organising activities that engage students directly rather than relying too heavily on lectures and memorisation. Hamman *et al* (2020) note that online courses are increasingly more of a norm and less of an exception for the general student population. It is the best alternative to face-to-face teaching and learning in the wake of COVID-19. While comparing online and traditional face-

to-face teaching and learning, Hamman *et al* (2020) reveal that students demonstrate similar learning outcomes in online and face-to-face modalities which shows that there is no significant difference in student learning outcomes across modalities. The study is supported by Lim *et al* (2007), Stack (2015), Neuhhauser (2010) cited in Hamman *et al* (2020).

Ebohon *et al* (2021) observe that migrating to remote and online teaching and learning within a short period seems difficult, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria where there has not been a good integration of advanced technology into the educational system. Pokhrel & Chheri (2021) in their observation note that despite the challenges posed to both educators and learners, online teaching, learning, distance and continuing education have been a panacea for the unprecedented global pandemic. The practices that became a norm during the COVID-19 pandemic have persisted and are now considered the new normal in the post-pandemic world. The need is to innovate and implement alternative educational systems and assessment strategies.

The Concept and Nature of Political Science

Political science is a discipline which belongs to the class of social science. It deals with the political issues of human beings having its subject matter as: Political institutions that are (state, government, judiciary, parliament, pressure groups, political parties and the like), political behaviour and activities of human political science (Biswas, 2020). In the works of Plato and Aristotle political science is the study of the state and interest in the greater good of the citizens (Maddocks 2024). It has a strong relationship with other social science disciplines such as economics, geography, sociology, philosophy, history, anthropology and others. Garner (2015), defines political science as the study of the state in the past, present and future of political organization and political function of political institutions and political theories. In other words, political science can be regarded as the study and understanding of the state and its subject for good governance.

Political science entails the theory and practice of political science, the description and analysis of political systems and political behaviour. It also includes matters concerning the allocation and transfer of power in decision-making, the roles and governance systems including government and international organisations, political behaviour and public policies. From the layman's point of view, the study of the political activity of man does not require scientific knowledge and should not be regarded as a science subject. Nevertheless, Biswas (2020) refers to political science as science based on the following reasons:

1. It is a systematized body of knowledge on broad terms like state and government after due observation, comparison and some sort of experimentation.
2. It is a dynamic study of living subject matter, it deals with man and his institutions.
3. The general laws are deduced from given materials and are useful in the actual problems of the government. This appears to be scientific.

Furthermore, political science as an academic field of study requires the use of some scientific methods in carrying out its research and can therefore be referred to as a science. Theories propounded by some renowned philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, Max Weber and others in political science are scientific and are referenced by the academia. Those who specialize in various fields of political science discipline research to discover hitherto unknown principles underlying political phenomena and make rich contributions to the realm of knowledge (Alkasim *et al* 2021).

Importance of Political Science

The study of political science is very important for the understanding of relations among states and international organizations, their interdependence, cooperation, peaceful co-existence and mutual assistance. (Alkasim *et-al* 2021).

Also, it is important for it offer writing, communication, analytical and data skills that are fundamental to a liberal education.

Biswas (2020) identified the importance of political science as:

1. It enables the understanding of citizenship: Citizens can understand the state and also participate in the decision-making process of governance through election and other political obligations.
2. It makes citizens conscious of their rights and duties to perform their roles to make them responsible in society.
3. It allows the opportunity to know the political thoughts of eminent political thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Karl Marx and others. To understand the present political problems and find solutions to them.
4. It enables the understanding of recent trends in the world which is possible through online learning. The society is in the era of globalization and it affects everyone in the world.
5. It allows the understanding of the roles of government, political parties and pressure groups.

Political science is a course offered at the University and College of Education in Nigeria. It is being offered for the award of a bachelor's degree in political science or political science education at the University and also for obtaining a certificate at the NCE level. Both the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) have political science curricula in their manuals of minimum standard (Alkasim *et al*, 2021). At the senior secondary school level, political science is offered as the government. It is taken as one of the examination subjects to obtain the Senior Secondary School Certificate.

Methods of Teaching Political Science

Olutunde (2009) and Kwasu (2013) in Alkasim *et al* (2021) identified two methods for teaching and learning political science:

1. **Teacher-Centered Methods:** They comprise the use of lecture method, storytelling method, repetition and drill method, review method, note-giving method, and controlled question and answer method amongst others. Lecturers and teachers make use of any, or even combine two or more methods to teach a single lesson effectively.
2. **Learner-Centered Methods:** The learner-centered method places the student at the centre of attention, not the teacher or the textbook. It is believed that students will learn better if placed at the center of teaching and learning. In teaching political science, the learner-centered methods include; the case study method, role-playing method, inquiry method, discovery method, problem-solving method, springboard method, homework, supervised study, field work, and small group discussion method among others.

Online Class Resources

The shift from physical classes to online teaching and learning has been established. This is possible with the use of some online platforms. Examples of such platforms according to Petrie (2020) and Ebohon *et al* (2021) include Unified Communication and Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Youtube, Slack, Twitter Space, Canvas, and Blackboard. Radio and television were also used. These allow the teacher to create educational courses, training and self-development programmes. In addition, Petrie (2020) observes the usefulness of workplace chat, file storage and video meetings in keeping classes organized and easy to work with and also supports the sharing of a variety of content like Word, PDF, Excel, File, Audio, Videos and many others. Students have access to their course materials and pre-recorded lectures through e-mails, Telegram, Messenger or WhatsApp groups. Other courses work-related activities include essay presentations, quizzes, assignments, assessments and examinations. All these have been in use since the period of covid-19 pandemic up till today for teaching,

learning and evaluation of students' academic progress. Thus, online classes ensure the continuation of teaching and learning even outside the classroom.

Strategies for Promoting Online Teaching and Learning of Political Science in the post- pandemic world

The post-pandemic world is characterized by significant changes specifically in education. This involves features such as blended learning, use of digital resources, virtual classrooms, and rethinking traditional teaching methods among others. All these are in use in tertiary institutions in Nigeria up till today. According to Aisyah and Murniati (2020), Online learning still needs to be carried out in the post-pandemic world as it is important for effective space and time efficiency and will turn to digital I T who will dominate the world thereby allowing the continuation of teaching and learning.

According to Wilson, Pollock and Hamman (2007), reading the online postings from other students and the instructor was instrumental to students' increased performance hence, an online component can benefit all courses (Pollock & Wilson, 2002). Therefore, the online reading of postings about, as well as teaching and learning of political science can enhance students' knowledge of the subject. They serve as good strategies for promoting online political science classes. In addition, students take advantage of enriched educational materials on textbook companion websites for their online studies. The websites according to Jozwiak (2015) provide supplemental materials including chapter outlines, summaries, online charts, role-playing exercises, updates on current events, sophisticated homework/assignments, multiple choice quizzes and short answer exercises among others. The textbook companion websites opportunity enable teachers' adequate preparation and delivery of subject matter and also enhance students' mastery of the subject contents. The American Political Science Association (APSA, 2021), further mention some strategies for success in the online political classroom:

1. Example virtual assignments and teaching approaches.

2. Encouraging student participation through the use of multimedia tools.
3. Building student connection in the asynchronous setting.
4. Future APSA education events.

Having mentioned some strategies for promoting online teaching and learning of political science, it is good to note that effective use of the aforementioned strategies can result into a huge success of the online class activities.

Benefits of Online Teaching and Learning

Online teaching and learning are beneficial to the user in several ways. Among the learners who benefit from online teaching include those who are unable to attend traditional classes, who live or work in remote locations, who work full-time and can only study at or after work and those who prefer to learn independently among other categories (Stern 2004). Some scholars have noted the benefit of online teaching over the traditional teaching method. Amasha *et al* (2018) as well as Thomas & Eryilmaz (2014) mention some benefits of online teaching as enhancement of students' motivation, interaction and communication through high-quality and collaborative online learning experiences (Hoffman, 2018, Holley, 2002). Further, Velumani (2013) in Akinyemi and Oke (2019) state some necessary ingredients that could improve online teaching and learning such as multi-point of access speed, functionality, mixed media content for better understanding, mobility, saving of physical space, conveniences, saving time and money. Subedi *et al* (2020) observe that schools and universities benefit greatly from e-learning because schools could facilitate student learning during the closure of schools. Another report from Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020) states that online learning allows physically challenged students more freedom to participate in learning in the virtual environment requiring limited movement, and also enabling access to additional and special support.

Stern (2004) lists out some benefits of online Teaching and Learning as:

Further Convenience: There is uninterrupted access to any online computer. It accommodates busy schedules, with no commuting or searching for parking.

Enhanced Learning: Research shows increased depth of understanding and retention of course content; more meaningful discussions; and emphasis on writing skills, technology skills, and life skills like time management, independence, and self-discipline.

Leveling of the Playing Field: There is more time to think and reflect before communicating. Shy students tend to thrive online because of the anonymity of the online environment.

Interaction: Increased student-to-teacher and student-to-student interaction and discussion; a more student-centered learning environment; less passive listening and more active learning; greater sense of connectedness and synergy.

Improved Administration: There is time to examine student work more thoroughly, document and record online interactions and manage grading online

Maximize Physical Resources: Lessen demand on limited campus infrastructure and decrease congestion on campus and parking lots.

Outreach: Give students options; reach new student markets; appeal to students thus increasing enrollments.

Savings: Accommodate more students; increased student satisfaction results in higher retention and fewer repeats.

By and large, the online mode of teaching enables students' continuation of learning activities and academic progress after the four walls of the classroom in the post-pandemic world.

Challenges of Online Teaching and Learning

The online teaching and learning of political science though beneficial to the users have some challenges which include economic, social and psychological challenges. Some of the challenges associated with e-learning include accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, lifelong learning and educational policy (Murgatroid 2020). The challenges are explained as:

Accessibility: Many students do not benefit from online learning as a result of irregular power supply and network services supply.

Affordability: some students are not financially buoyant to afford the cost of online learning, especially the purchase of mobile data.

Flexibility: some online resources are not flexible, they are limited in capacity as a result cannot accommodate a large number of students.

Learning pedagogy: Teaching methods that cannot be extensively used in online teaching may prevent students' understanding of the subject matter.

Life-long learning: life-long learning may require teaching some practical aspects which might not be well delivered in online class.

Educational policy: the inconsistencies in policy formulation implementation and funding could prevent the success of online education. Students taking online classes usually spend additional time on virtual platforms. This has made the majority of the students vulnerable to online exploitation. Many students have been exposed to and engaged in harmful and violent content as well as cyberbullying (Prokhrel & Chhetri, 2021).] Other challenges of online teaching and learning include limited feedback from the students, irregular supply of power, inaccessibility to the computer, illiterate population, lack of communication skills and economically disadvantaged learners among others.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that online teaching in learning political science in the post-pandemic world is essential. This is because it is crucial to the development of education in Nigeria and the world. While other sectors may not for any reason continue with the organisation activities, the education sector strives and proceeds with online teaching and learning preventing putting on hold or total collapse of the schools' crucial responsibility. This gives the learners the opportunity to continue their education outside the four walls of the classroom, enables them to progress and compete with their pairs favourably across the globe and encourages users' online resources more knowledge and mastery for further use. The concept, nature, importance and methods of teaching political science as addressed in the paper were able to reveal the imperativeness of online teaching

and learning of the course. The online benefits and challenges are also required for the users to improve where necessary for better output and greater achievements.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Government should give wider publicity on the use of online resources for teaching and learning of subjects and courses including political science in schools and higher institutions of learning.
2. Government should encourage online teaching and learning in schools by making available well-equipped computer centers for students' use.
3. Government policies on education should be made in a way that would accommodate the inclusion of online teaching and learning for the advancement of education in Nigeria.
4. Government should improve the domestic supply of electricity in Nigeria, and ensure its stability and uninterrupted power transmission/distribution.
5. The network providers should improve their services to ensure continuous accessibility/connectivity.
6. Parents should also encourage their children and wards by providing the online resources necessary for their use to make learning accessible and comfortable.
7. The educators and the learners should endeavour to update their knowledge of online teaching and learning for better teaching-learning engagement.

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