

The Challenges and Opportunities of Online Learning for Political Science Students and Instructors in Nigeria

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Abstract: Online learning has become a popular mode of education delivery in many countries, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, online learning also poses some challenges and opportunities for political science students and instructors in Nigeria. This paper aims to examine the current state of online learning in political science in Nigeria, identify the main challenges and opportunities, and suggest some recommendations for improvement. The paper adopts related literature, journals, text and articles as source of data. The paper finds that online learning in political science in Nigeria is still at a nascent stage, with limited access, quality, and diversity of courses and resources. The paper also identifies some of the challenges faced by political science students and instructors in online learning, such as inadequate infrastructure, low digital literacy, lack of interaction and feedback, and academic integrity issues. On the other hand, the paper highlights some of the opportunities offered by online learning for political science students in Nigeria, such as flexibility, convenience, cost-effectiveness, and exposure to global perspectives and best practices. The paper concludes by offering some suggestions for enhancing online learning in political science in Nigeria, such as improving infrastructure and connectivity, developing digital skills and competencies, increasing collaboration and engagement, and ensuring quality assurance and accreditation.

Keywords: Online learning, challenges, opportunities, political science and students.

INTRODUCTION

Online learning has become a popular and convenient way of acquiring knowledge and skills in various fields, including political science. It is the use of electronic devices and internet connection to access educational content and instruction from anywhere and at any time. It has become more popular and accessible in Nigeria and beyond, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic that disrupted the traditional mode of education (Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2021).

Online learning offers many benefits to learners and educators, such as flexibility, convenience, affordability, personalization, and collaboration. It also helps to bridge the gap between the demand and supply of quality education in Nigeria, where many students face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, poor funding, low enrollment, and high dropout rates.

Online learning is a viable and valuable option for education in Nigeria that can complement and enhance the traditional mode of education. It can help to improve access, quality, equity, and relevance of education in Nigeria. Online learning can also help to prepare learners for the 21st century skills and competencies that are required in the globalized and digitalized world (Nwankwo & Nwankwo, 2020).

However, online learning also faces some challenges and limitations in Nigeria, such as poor internet connectivity, inadequate infrastructure, lack of quality assurance, low digital literacy, and social isolation. Therefore, online learning in

Nigeria requires more investment, innovation, collaboration, and regulation to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability in the long term.

Political science is the study of governments, political processes, public policies, and international relations. It encompasses a wide range of topics, such as democracy, human rights, security, development, and globalization. Political science is the study of politics and power in human societies. It examines how political institutions, processes, and behaviors shape and are shaped by social, economic, and cultural factors. Political science also explores the normative and ethical dimensions of political issues, such as justice, democracy, and human rights. Political science as a course can provide students with analytical tools and empirical knowledge to understand and engage with the complex and dynamic world of politics (Adebayo & Oyebode, 2019). Political science as a course can also foster critical thinking, communication, and civic skills that are essential for active citizenship and professional development. Some of the subfields of political science include comparative politics, international relations, political theory, public policy, and American politics. Each subfield has its own theoretical frameworks, research methods, and substantive topics of inquiry. Political science as a course can expose students to a variety of perspectives and debates within and across these subfields, and encourage them to develop their own arguments and positions based on evidence and logic. Online political science courses and

programs can help students and instructors learn about these topics from different perspectives and sources, as well as develop critical thinking, analytical, and communication skills (Aluede, *et al.*, 2012).

Political science is a discipline that studies the theory and practice of politics, government, and public affairs. It is one of the social sciences that aims to understand how political systems work, how they affect people's lives, and how they can be improved. Political science students in Nigeria tertiary institutions need to acquire relevant skills and knowledge that will enable them to contribute to the development of their country and the world at large.

A political science student is someone who has met certain academic requirement like minimum of 5 credits in SSCE/GCE at maximum of two sittings, got Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) score of at least 180, while candidates with minimum of merit pass in NCE, National Diploma, and other advanced level certificate minimum qualifications with minimum of 5 O'Level credits are given direct entry into the appropriate degree programs. Political science students in Nigeria tertiary institutions can choose from various specializations, such as international relations, public administration, political economy, comparative politics, political theory, and so on. They can also pursue further studies at the postgraduate level or seek employment in various sectors, such as government, civil society, media, academia, diplomacy, and so on.

Political science instructors in tertiary institutions are responsible for teaching courses on various topics related to politics, such as comparative politics, international relations, political theory, public policy, and research methods. They also conduct academic research, publish scholarly articles and books, and participate in professional associations and conferences. Political science instructors may have different qualifications and backgrounds depending on the type and level of the institution they work for. For example, some may have a doctoral degree in political science or a related field, while others may have a master's degree or a bachelor's degree with relevant experience. Some may specialize in a specific subfield or region of the world, while others may have a broader scope of expertise. For instance, some may have to deal with academic freedom issues, political pressure, or limited resources, while others may enjoy more autonomy, support,

or recognition. Some may also have to balance their teaching and research duties, as well as their service and outreach activities. Political science instructors play an important role in educating students about the political world and preparing them for various careers and civic engagement. They also contribute to the advancement of knowledge and understanding of political phenomena and issues. Therefore, political science instructors in tertiary institutions are valuable members of the academic community and society at large.

Political science education in Nigeria tertiary institutions can benefit from the application of information technology (IT) to enhance skill acquisition. According to Ajayi & Ekundayo (2009), IT can help political science students to access information from all parts of the world, interact with other scholars and practitioners, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. IT can also help political science teachers to deliver effective and innovative teaching methods, such as online lectures, simulations, games, and so on.

Online learning is a promising and progressive mode of education that can benefit learners and educators in Nigeria. Online learning can overcome some of the challenges that face the conventional education system in Nigeria. It can also provide opportunities for lifelong learning and skill development for learners (Aworanti, *et al.*, 2016). However, online learning also requires some challenges that need to be addressed by various stakeholders. It also requires some changes in the mindset and behavior of learners and educators. It is not a replacement for traditional education but a supplement that can enhance it.

However, online learning also poses some challenges and opportunities for political science education. For example, how can online courses and programs ensure the quality and rigor of political science content and instruction? How can online learners and instructors interact effectively and collaboratively in a virtual environment? How can online political science education address the diversity and complexity of political issues and contexts in the world? How can online political science education prepare students for careers in government, academia, civil society, or the private sector? This study therefore seeks to examine the challenges and opportunities of online learning for political science students and instructors in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Online learning has become a widespread and popular mode of education in recent years, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it also poses significant challenges and limitations for both students and instructors of political science. In this study some of the main problems that online learning entails for the field of political science will be discussed and some citations from relevant sources will be provided (Umar & Umar, 2021).

One of the problems that online learning poses for political science is the lack of direct interaction and engagement between students and instructors, as well as among students themselves. Political science is a discipline that relies heavily on discussion, debate, and collaboration, as it deals with complex and controversial issues that require multiple perspectives and critical thinking. Online learning, however, often reduces the opportunities and quality of such interactions, as it relies on asynchronous communication, text-based platforms, and limited feedback mechanisms (Okoye & Okoye, 2020). This can affect the motivation, participation, and learning outcomes of students, as well as the satisfaction and effectiveness of instructors.

Another problem that online learning poses for political science is the difficulty of accessing and evaluating diverse and reliable sources of information. Political science is a discipline that requires students to be well-informed and critical of various sources of information, such as news media, government reports, academic journals, and social media. Online learning, however, can expose students to a plethora of information that may be inaccurate, biased, or misleading. Moreover, online learning can also limit the access and availability of certain sources of information, such as library resources, archives, or fieldwork opportunities. This can affect the quality and validity of students' research and analysis, as well as their ability to develop informed and nuanced opinions (Adesina & Ayo, 2010).

These are some of the main problems that online learning poses for political science students and instructors. Online learning is not necessarily inferior or ineffective compared to traditional face-to-face learning, but it does require careful design, adaptation, and evaluation to address its specific challenges and limitations for the field of political science. It is against this background that this study examines the challenges and opportunities of

online learning for political science students and instructors in Nigeria.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this paper is to examine the challenges and opportunities of online learning for political science students and instructors in Nigeria.

Specifically the study seeks to:

- Explore the benefits of online learning for political science, such as access to diverse and updated resources, flexibility and convenience, and exposure to global perspectives and networks;
- Investigate the barriers to online learning for political science, such as inadequate infrastructure and connectivity, lack of quality assurance and accreditation, and socio-cultural and political factors and
- Examine the best practices and recommendations for online learning for political science, such as adopting blended learning models, enhancing learner support and engagement, and fostering collaboration and dialogue among stakeholders.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the benefits of online learning for political science, such as access to diverse and updated resources, flexibility and convenience, and exposure to global perspectives and networks?
2. What are the barriers to online learning for political science, such as inadequate infrastructure and connectivity, lack of quality assurance and accreditation, and socio-cultural and political factors?
3. What are the best practices and recommendations for online learning for political science, such as adopting blended learning models, enhancing learner support and engagement, and fostering collaboration and dialogue among stakeholders?

LITERATURE REVIEW-OVERVIEW OF ONLINE LEARNING

Online learning is a type of educational activity that makes use of electronic devices and the internet to deliver and access learning materials, interact with instructors and peers, and assess learning outcomes. It is also known as e-learning, distance learning, or online education (Alabi I, et al., 2014). Online learning has been growing rapidly in the past few decades, especially with the advancement of technology and the increased

demand for flexible and accessible education. It can offer various benefits to learners, such as convenience, cost-effectiveness, diversity, and personalization.

However, online learning also poses some challenges and requires some skills and strategies to be effective. One of the challenges is the transactional distance, which refers to the psychological and communication gap between learners and instructors in online environments. To reduce this distance, online learning should provide ample opportunities for dialogue and feedback, as well as clear structure and guidance. Another challenge is the presence, which refers to the sense of being and belonging in online learning communities. To enhance presence, online learning should foster cognitive, social, and teaching interactions among learners and instructors, using various tools and media. A third challenge is independent learning, which refers to the ability and responsibility of learners to manage their own learning process and outcomes. To support independent learning, online learning should promote self-regulation, motivation, and reflection among learners. To design and implement effective online learning courses, instructors should follow some pedagogical guidelines based on these concepts and challenges. Some of these guidelines according to Asogwa, *et al.*, (2012) are:

- Design structures and flows to embrace experiential learning, which is a learner-centered approach that involves active participation, problem-solving, and reflection.
- Accommodate both synchronous and asynchronous learning, which are different modes of online learning that have different advantages and disadvantages. Synchronous learning allows real-time interaction and collaboration, while asynchronous learning allows flexibility and self-pacing.
- Design and facilitate interactions, which are essential for creating dialogue, presence, and community in online learning. Interactions can be between learners and instructors, learners and content, or learners and learners.
- Promote practice opportunities, which are necessary for enhancing retention, transfer, and application of knowledge and skills in online learning. Practice opportunities can include quizzes, assignments, projects, simulations, or games.
- Promote a learning community, which is a group of learners who share common goals,

interests, and values in online learning. A learning community can foster social presence, peer support, collaboration, and feedback.

Online learning is a powerful and innovative way of delivering education in the 21st century. By understanding its concepts and challenges, and applying its guidelines, instructors can design and deliver effective online courses that can meet the needs and expectations of diverse learners.

What are The Benefits of Online Learning for Political Science, Such as Access to Diverse and Updated Resources, Flexibility and Convenience, and Exposure to Global Perspectives and Networks?

Online learning has become a popular and convenient option for many students who want to pursue a degree in political science. Political science is the study of political systems, behavior, and processes, and it covers topics such as political theory, American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and public policy. It offers several benefits for political science students, such as access to diverse and updated resources, flexibility and convenience, and exposure to global perspectives and networks.

One of the benefits of online learning for political science is that it allows students to access a wide range of resources that can enhance their knowledge and skills. Online learning often uses multimedia materials, such as videos, podcasts, interactive simulations, and digital archives that can provide different perspectives and insights on political issues and events. Online learning also enable students to access the latest research and publications from reputable sources, such as academic journals, think tanks, and international organizations. These resources can help students stay updated on current political developments and trends, as well as deepen their understanding of political concepts and theories (Baloyi *et al.*, 2015).

Another benefit of online learning for political science is that it offers flexibility and convenience for students who have other personal or professional obligations. Online learning allows students to study at their own pace and schedule, without having to commute to campus or attend fixed class times. Online courses also give students more control over their learning environment, as they can choose where and when to study, according to their preferences and needs. Online learning can also save students time and money, as

they do not have to pay for transportation, parking, or housing costs associated with on-campus learning (Baran, *et al.*, 2013).

A third benefit of online learning for political science is that it exposes students to global perspectives and networks that can enrich their learning experience and career opportunities. Online learning often involve interactions with instructors and peers from different countries and backgrounds, who can share their views and experiences on political issues and topics. Online learning can also facilitate cross-cultural communication and collaboration among students, who can learn from each other's perspectives and opinions. It can also help students build professional networks with experts and practitioners in the field of political science, who can offer guidance, feedback, and mentorship (Roskin, *et al.*, 2019).

Online learning offers many advantages for students who want to pursue a degree in political science. It can provide access to diverse and updated resources, flexibility and convenience, and exposure to global perspectives and networks that can enhance students' knowledge, skills, and career prospects in political science.

What are the Barriers to Online Learning for Political Science, Such as Inadequate Infrastructure and Connectivity, Lack of Quality Assurance and Accreditation, and Socio-Cultural and Political Factors?

Online learning is a growing trend in higher education, especially in the field of political science. For this reason, it poses some challenges for both instructors and students; challenges such: as inadequate infrastructure and connectivity, lack of quality assurance and accreditation, and socio-cultural and political factors. In this study, these challenges will be explored and some possible solutions proffered.

Inadequate infrastructure and connectivity:

Online learning requires reliable and fast internet access, as well as devices that can support various online platforms and tools. However, not all students and instructors have access to these resources, especially in developing countries or rural areas. This can create a digital divide that affects the quality and equity of online education. Some possible solutions are to provide low-cost or free internet access and devices to students in need, to use offline or low-bandwidth modes of delivery when possible, and to design courses that

are flexible and adaptable to different levels of connectivity (Heywood 2018).

Lack of quality assurance and accreditation:

Online learning also raises some concerns about the quality and credibility of online courses and programs, especially in comparison to traditional face-to-face modes of delivery. Some online courses may not meet the standards and expectations of academic rigor, pedagogical effectiveness, student engagement, and assessment validity. Moreover, some online programs may not be recognized or accredited by relevant authorities or employers, which can affect the value and employability of online degrees. Some possible solutions are to establish clear and consistent criteria and guidelines for online course design, delivery, and evaluation, to ensure regular quality assurance and improvement processes, and to seek accreditation from reputable agencies or organizations (Heywood, 2018) for political science in this regard.

Socio-cultural and political factors:

Online learning also involves some socio-cultural and political factors that can influence the learning outcomes and experiences of students and instructors. For example, it may require students to adapt to different learning styles, expectations, and norms than those they are used to in their own cultural contexts. Online learning may also expose students to diverse perspectives and opinions that may challenge their existing beliefs or values. Furthermore, it may be affected by political issues such as censorship, surveillance, or cyberattacks that may limit the freedom and security of online communication. Some possible solutions are to foster a culture of respect, tolerance, and dialogue among online learners and instructors, to provide adequate support and guidance for cross-cultural communication and collaboration, and to adopt appropriate measures to protect the privacy and safety of online participants (Van Belle, *et al.*, 2018).

Online learning is a growing trend in higher education, especially in the field of political science. However, it also poses some challenges for both instructors and students who want to engage in the study of politics. In this blog post, I will discuss some of the barriers to online learning for political science, such as inadequate infrastructure and connectivity, lack of quality assurance and accreditation, and socio-cultural and political factors.

What are the Best Practices for Online Learning for Political Science, Such as Adopting Blended Learning Models, Enhancing Learner Support and Engagement, and Fostering Collaboration and Dialogue among Stakeholders?

Online learning for political science is a growing trend that offers many benefits for students and educators alike. It can help learners gain a deeper understanding of the concepts and applications of political science, such as power, politics, government, law, policy, administration, social capital, international relations, globalization, and more. It can also provide flexibility, convenience, affordability, and access to a diverse range of perspectives and resources.

Although online learning for political science also poses some challenges, its effectiveness and qualities can be enhanced by application of some recommended best practices. Here are some of the key aspects to consider when designing, delivering, or taking online courses in political science:

Adopting blended learning models: Blended learning combines online and face-to-face instruction to create a more engaging and interactive learning experience. Blended learning can help students develop critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and research skills that are essential for political science. Blended learning can also foster a sense of community and belonging among students and instructors, which can enhance motivation and retention. Some examples of blended learning models are flipped classroom, hybrid course, project-based learning, and peer instruction (Akpan & Elekwa, 2012).

Enhancing learner support and engagement: Just like all online learners need adequate support and guidance from instructors and peers to succeed in their courses, online learners of political science are no exception. Their instructors should provide clear expectations, feedback, and communication channels for them. They should also use various strategies to stimulate the students' interest and participation, such as multimedia content, interactive activities, quizzes, polls, discussions, case studies, simulations, games, and guest speakers. In the same token, online learners of political science should seek out opportunities to connect with their classmates and instructors through online forums, chats, video calls, study groups, and social media (Anderson & Elloumi, 2004).

Fostering collaboration and dialogue among stakeholders: Online learning for political science involves multiple stakeholders who have different roles and responsibilities in the learning process. These include students, instructors, administrators, policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and community members. Online learning can facilitate collaboration and dialogue among these stakeholders by creating a shared space for exchanging ideas, perspectives, information, resources, feedback, and solutions. Online learning can also promote social responsibility and civic engagement by encouraging students to apply their political science knowledge and skills to real-world issues and problems (Oyewole & Oyewole, 2020).

SUMMARY

The rapid growth of online learning in Nigeria has created both challenges and opportunities for political science students and instructors. Online learning can offer greater access, flexibility, and convenience for learners who want to pursue their academic goals in a dynamic and diverse field. However, it also requires adequate infrastructure, resources, and support to ensure quality and effectiveness. Political science students and instructors need to be aware of the benefits and drawbacks of online learning, as well as the best practices and strategies to succeed in this mode of delivery. This summary provides an overview of the current state of online learning for political science in Nigeria, as well as some recommendations for improvement and innovation based on relevant literature (e.g., Aldahdouh, *et al.*, 2020; Hamann, *et al.*, 2016; Intyaswati, *et al.*, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the challenges and opportunities of online learning for political science students and instructors in Nigeria. It has argued that it can offer a flexible and accessible mode of education that can enhance the quality and relevance of political science education in the country. However, it has also identified some barriers and limitations that need to be addressed, such as inadequate infrastructure, low digital literacy, lack of institutional support, and socio-cultural factors. The paper has suggested some recommendations to overcome these challenges and to maximize the potential of online learning for political science education in Nigeria. These include improving the availability and affordability of internet access and devices, developing online

pedagogical skills and resources, creating a supportive and collaborative online learning environment, and promoting a culture of academic integrity and professionalism among online learners and instructors.

In conclusion, online learning can offer political science students and instructors in Nigeria access to diverse and updated sources of information, as well as opportunities for collaboration and networking with peers and experts from different regions and contexts

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made by the researcher based on the arguments and the findings of the study:

1. There is a need to develop a national policy framework and guidelines for online learning that ensure quality standards, accreditation mechanisms, and ethical principles for online political science programs and courses.
2. Provision of adequate funding and support for the development and maintenance of online learning infrastructure, platforms, and resources for political science education in Nigeria is imperative.
3. There is a need to enhance the digital literacy and skills of political science students and instructors in Nigeria through training, mentoring, and peer-learning initiatives.
4. There is a need to promote online collaboration and exchange among political science students and instructors in Nigeria and beyond, through networks, communities of practice, and joint projects.
5. Encouraging innovation and experimentation in online political science pedagogy and curriculum design, to foster critical thinking, civic engagement, and global citizenship among learners is important.

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