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USE OF GOOGLE CLASSROOM IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ECONOMICS IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA: COVID-19 PANDEMIC REDUCTION STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

Google Classroom has gained a significant importance for instructional delivery across the world, yet educators in Nigerian Universities are yet to tap from the wealth of this trending educational technological tool which best fit the teaching and learning of economics. It is a digital instructional delivery tool needed for teaching/learning economics amidst COVID-19 pandemic since both teachers and students are readily at home. The google Classroom allow the creation of a digital class, fosters communication within a community, organises folders, shares information, enables posting of assignments and viewing all posted works in real-time. This paper in light of the above discussed the need for professional development of economic teachers, Practical approach to Professional Development of economic teachers in Google Classroom and the Instructional delivery. The approach involves creating a digital class by Navigating through https://classroom.google.com. Once the teacher log in, other simple steps will follow as will be instructed through the Google classroom Teacher's Guide. A platform is created where the teacher can invite the students for other class activities. What a very useful digital classroom amidst COVID-19 pandemic! Conclusively, the digitally blended instructional delivery approach has come to stay with the advent of Information Communication Technology. Students can easily access the learning content at home at their pace via their handsets and Laptops or iPad.

Keywords: Google Classroom; COVID-19 pandemic; Instructional delivery; Economies.

Introduction

Nowadays, education has gained a paradigm shift from teacher-centric to learner or learning-centric. According to Azhar, and Iqbal (2018), the age in which teachers go into class with a lesson plan designed by them and is gradually fading away. Ogbuanya, et. al (2014) asserted that a new era of education has started where teaching/learning is blended digitally. Earlier, teachers played the role of knowledge providers, but now their role is to monitor, guide, and facilitate teaching and learning but not an attempt to act as a knowledge conduit. There is a lot of emphasis on integrating technology in the classroom through innovative teaching strategies that focus on enabling students to achieve the desired learning objectives (Hwang, Lai, & Wang, 2015). Technology facilitates students' engagement with learning content (Northey, et al 2015) which is critical to obtain the desired learning objectives (Bolkan, 2015).

Within the loop of COVID-19 pandemic where both teachers' and students' are at home, an educational means of teaching and learning economics is paramount. While at home, both teachers' desire to navigate through the use of Google Classroom for class interaction. No matter how good pre-service training for teachers is, it cannot expect to prepare teachers' for all the challenges they will face throughout their careers. A clear instance is to deliver educational content to students amidst the COVID-19 pandemic era. This piece of work seeks to provide teachers' with opportunities for inservice professional

development in Google Classroom to maintain a high standard of teaching and to retain a high-quality teacher workforce while at home. As regards to this piece of work Professional Development of economics teachers' through the use of Google Classroom as one of the new Instructional delivery tools which economics teachers' need to be professionally developed upon while delivering the contents of economics to students in Nigerian Universities. The practical approach to Professional Development of economics teachers' in Google Classroom was also discussed.

Teachers' Professional Development

Professional development (PD) is not effective unless it causes teachers' to improve their instruction or causes administrators to become better school leaders. Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) asserted that effective professional development is seen as structured professional learning that results in changes to teacher's knowledge and practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes. Marcelo (2009) substantiated that the professional development of a teacher is looked upon as a contribution to the development of the teacher's professional skills, employing a variety of both formal and informal experiences. In view of Bautista, and Ortega-Ruiz, (2015) teachers' professional development PD is seen as equivalent to in-service teacher education (continuing, ongoing). In the context of this study, teachers' professional development PD is a product of Google-embedded activities that increase teachers' knowledge, skills, expertise, and other characteristics that help them change their instructional practice in ways that support students' learning while at home. The development of teachers' beyond their initial training can serve several objectives according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2009), including:

- To update individuals' knowledge of a subject in light of recent advances in the area;
- To update individuals' skills, attitudes and approaches in light of the development of new teaching techniques and objectives, new circumstances and new educational research;
- To enable individuals to apply changes made to curricula or other aspects of teaching practice;
- To enable schools to develop and apply new strategies concerning the curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice;
- To exchange information and expertise among teachers and others, e.g. academics, industrialists; and
- To help weaker teachers' become more effective.

Effective Professional Development of teachers' of economics therefore in the use of Google Classroom (GC), is of immense importance because it enables economic educators to develop the knowledge and skills they need to address students' learning challenges. The professional development of economics teachers' through the use of Google classroom GC enables the educators to focus on content, create opportunities for active learning, support work-embedded collaboration, model best practices, coach and support, incorporate feedback, and reflective practice. Khadka (2016) asserted that teaching economics to students in a clear and unbiased manner supports beginner students' master the essential principles of understanding the economics problems, and specific economic issues. In extension, it helps the students' to understand and apply economics in a precise and empirical manner on economic issues and promote a lasting students' interest in issue of economics. The rise of the Internet and increasingly ubiquitous nature of social media and online learning combined with the limitations of traditional forms of professional development has led school systems and educators to explore ways to experience professional development online. An online

approach to instructional delivery is quite appreciable most especially now that COVID-19 pandemic derailed most activities in the country.

Instructional delivery is an instructor's approach to teaching based on his or her own professional identity that helps the teacher to create a unique classroom culture. Ogbuanya, et. al (2014) explained Instructional delivery to mean the interaction among the students' the teachers' the content, and the knowledge/skills/dispositions students' will need for learning and collaborating with others in a diverse society and rapidly changing world. The process of instructional delivery involves applying a repertoire of instructional strategies to communicate and interact with students' around academic content and to support student engagement (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013). Amids COVID-19 pandemic, a new approach to teaching and learning is eminent as a major pandemic reduction strategy while obeying the sit-at-home order. The use of Google Classroom is appreciable in this regards.

Google classroom

Amidst a critical moment such as that of COVID-19 pandemic, the best way for teachers' to discuss the content of a course, send assignments, text, and others to students' at home is through the use of Google Classroom. Since the 23rd of March 2020, teachers' across the country are not allowed to have direct contact with students' for fear of the corona virus. Hence the professional development of economics teachers' to meet up with students' educational needs is inevitable. Teachers' of economics education need to seriously advance their approach to instructional delivery through the use of Google Classroom platform. To optimize the methodology of instructional delivery of teachers' towards the application of Google Classroom, the economics teachers' need to follow a step by step approach of creating and joining the class.

Google Classroom was introduced in 2014, as a platform for a web-based classroom. It is one of the technological and pedagogical innovations invented by Google Applications for Education (GAFE), apart from other Google applications namely Google docs, Google Spreadsheet and Google calendars (Azhar, & Iqbal, 2018; Zakaria, et al. (2020). Economics teachers' will be able to create a class for a course and invite other members namely educators and learners to join. Being a member or citizen, one can have immediate access and the ability to learn in a virtual setting. According to Bell (2015), by only one click, one can be connected even physically they are scattered in disperse locations. This web-based platform is fully integrated with other Google applications and thus enables members to share and distribute information instantaneously without leaping from one site to another. Google classroom benefits users in many ways. Amongst the benefits are offering a platform for facilitating digital production, allowing the creation of a digital class, fostering communication within a community, organizing folders, sharing information, posting assignments, and viewing all posted works in real-time (Beaumont, 2018). Google Classroom as a platform, ties together Google's G Suite tools for teachers' and students'. It also acts as a digital organizer (Bell, 2015) where teachers' can keep class materials and share them with students' in a paperless form. With the advent of Google Classroom (GC), teachers' can interact with the individual students' where they are and at any time provided there are functional network facilities.

How can Google Classroom support differentiation in the classroom?

Google Classroom can help streamline formative assessment, which is important in helping students' who might need more support or extra challenges. For example, the teacher can use the platform to quickly create, distribute, and collect digital exit tickets or auto-

graded assessments. In a way, Google Classroom can make it easier and faster to gather regular feedback on students' progress. Google Classroom also makes it easier to customize assignments for individual students or small groups. This means teachers' can give modified or different assignments to certain students' or groups in a class. Teachers' also have the option to check in with a students' privately to see whether they have questions or need extra help. The option to do all of this online could make teachers' efforts at differentiation less conspicuous to the class, something that can be helpful for students' who might feel singled out.

A practical approach to Professional Development of economics teachers' in Google Classroom

Creating a Class with Google Classroom

Creating classes is the first step for teachers' who want to set up an online space with Google Classroom. Here's how you do to achieve it within a short period of time.

- Navigate to https://classroom.google.com with your Gmail address
- Click the "+" sign at the top right-hand corner next to your Google account
- Select "Create Class", then give it a name and a section, and click "Create"

The "Section" field is a secondary descriptor for your class, so here you may want to add something like 1st period, a grade level, or some other short description

Adding Students to Your Classes

Once you have created all the classes that you need, you can quickly add students to your roster. You can do this by following the instructions below.

Click on the class that you want students to register for

Make a note of the class code (located on the left) and distribute this to students.

Students will then navigate to https://classroom.google.com, click the "+" sign in the top right-hand corner of the screen, and select "Join class"

Students enter the class code, and will instantly be added to the class

Note that the class code can be changed or disabled at any time by the teacher. Simply click the drop-down next to the class code and choose to reset or disable it as you feel the need. Resetting or disabling the code will not affect student who have already registered for your class.

Create an Assignment in Google Classroom

Assignments can be created, and assigned to students, from inside Google Classroom, and these are a number of useful options here for educators. Here's how to add your first assignment.

Click on the class you want to add an assignment to

Now click "Assignment" in the middle of the page

Give your assignment a title and add any additional instructions or a description in the box below

Click the date to choose a due date for your assignment, and add a time if you want to specify when it is due on a given day

Choose the type of assignment you wish to create by clicking on one of the icons next to the word Assign. Your choices are to upload a file from your computer, attach a file from Google Drive, add a YouTube video, or add a link to a website.

Click "Assign" to give this assignment to your students.

If you want to give the assignment to more than one class, click the name of the class at the bottom of the assignment window and choose the classes you want to assign it to.

Students' quick guide to Google Classroom First Login according to Bell (2015), Go to classroom.google.com.
The first time you arrive at the Google Classroom website you will see a screen like the one below.
Scroll down and choose student as your role
Join a Class with the Class Code:
1. Go to classroom.google.com.
If it is your first login, be sure to select your role as Student (see previous page).
2. Click the + on the top right of the page to Join Class.
3. Enter the Class Code given to you by your teacher, and click Join.
Students' View: Stream
The Stream is where students' can view and access announcements, assignments, discussion topics, and comments. If enabled by the teacher, students can also add posts and leave comments.
Below are directions and reminders for students'.
Add a Student Post to the Stream:
Click the + in the bottom right of the screen, and then choose Create Post
• Add the text of your class post. Remember, this is viewable by your teacher and the entire class.
Use the post to ask a relevant question about the class or assignments, collaborate with other students in your class, or to share relevant resources related to the class subject and topics.
Note: Your comments are saved, even after they have been deleted. Your teacher can always see what you share so keep it appropriate.

Teachers' who follow the Google classroom approach above will smoothly deliver instructions as well as interact with students' without major obstacles. At the same time, such a teacher has professionally developed them in that aspect while at home. Since most of the teachers' are digital migrants, it is required of such a class of teachers' to take one-week professional development training in Google Classroom. This article could serve as a place to start with. Although some challenges such as sources of network, data, electricity, and phobia in using electronic gadgets among others may not be inevitable, it can be relatively controlled while the Google Class is in progress. Teachers' and students' should navigate through https://classroom.google.com for details of the Google Classroom Guide.

Conclusion

The digitally blended instructional delivery approach has come to stay with the advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT). Students' can easily access the learning content at home at their pace via their handsets and Laptops or iPad etc. Through Google Classroom an educator will create a class for a course and invite educators and learners to join. This web-based platform is fully integrated with other Google applications and thus enables members to share and distribute information instantaneously without leaping from one site to another. Use of Google classroom benefits users in many ways. The benefits include offering a platform for facilitating digital production, allowing the creation of a digital class, fostering communication within a community, organizing folders, sharing information, posting assignments, and viewing all posted works in real-time. The economics teachers' are therefore, encouraged to key into this Google classroom Instructional delivery approach for professional development since teaching/learning is best appreciated through a digital platform especially amidst COVID-19 pandemic era.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The use of Google Classroom as the adopted e-learning mode should be encouraged in all higher institutions in Nigeria because of its many benefits.
2. Teachers educators and indeed all educators in the higher education system should upgrade their skill in the use of Google classroom application in presentation of contents in their subject areas.
3. Students as students will generally teach the way they were taught. To ensure that they integrate technology in their teaching after training, e-learning should be made available in teacher education institution to enable them make use of them in learning and in teaching.

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