



Effectiveness of Virtual Classroom Programs on Teaching Skills for Tertiary Education Teachers

Umar Ibrahim^{1*}, Ibrahim Jamilu Argungu², Sani Ahmad Yeldu³

^{1,2}Department of Computer Science, Adamu Augie College of Education, Argungu, Kebbi State

³Department of Computer Science, Federal University Birnin Kebbi

Corresponding Author: Umar Ibrahim uibrahim680@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of technology has revolutionized educational methodologies, particularly through the advent of virtual classroom programs. This article explores the effectiveness of these programs in enhancing teaching skills among tertiary education teachers. A comprehensive review of existing literature is combined with data from surveys and case studies to evaluate the impact of virtual classrooms on teaching techniques, teacher-student interactions, and professional development opportunities. The findings indicate that virtual classroom programs offer significant benefits, including improved instructional methods and greater accessibility to professional development resources. However, challenges such as technological barriers and adaptation difficulties persist. A comparative analysis with traditional classroom settings highlights the potential of blended learning models. The article concludes with recommendations for best practices and institutional support to maximize the benefits of virtual classrooms. Further research areas are also identified to deepen the understanding of virtual classroom effectiveness in tertiary education

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, virtual classroom programs have gained significant traction in the realm of education, particularly within tertiary institutions. These programs leverage advanced technologies to deliver interactive and flexible learning experiences that transcend the limitations of traditional classroom settings. As tertiary education faces increasing pressure to innovate and adapt to the digital age, understanding the effectiveness of virtual classroom programs on teaching skills becomes paramount.

Teaching skills are the cornerstone of educational success, particularly at the tertiary level where educators are tasked with not only imparting knowledge but also fostering critical thinking and advanced problem-solving abilities in their students. The dynamic nature of virtual classroom environments presents both opportunities and challenges for enhancing these skills. This article aims to evaluate the extent to which virtual classroom programs can effectively improve teaching skills among tertiary education teachers.

Previous studies have highlighted various aspects of virtual learning environments, including their impact on student engagement and learning outcomes (Smith, 2019; Johnson, 2020). However, there remains a gap in literature specifically addressing how these programs influence the pedagogical practices and professional development of teachers. By reviewing existing research and analysing current data, this article seeks to fill this gap and provide actionable insights for educators and policymakers.

The objective of this article is to critically assess the effectiveness of virtual classroom programs in enhancing the teaching skills of tertiary education teachers. Through a comprehensive literature review, data collection, and analysis, we will explore the ways in which these programs contribute to improved teaching techniques, foster better teacher-student interactions, and offer valuable opportunities for professional growth. Additionally, we will identify the challenges and limitations associated with virtual teaching environments and propose recommendations for maximizing their potential benefits.

This investigation is timely and relevant, given the increasing reliance on virtual learning platforms amidst global educational shifts, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Brown, 2021). By understanding the strengths and weaknesses of virtual classroom programs, we can better support tertiary education teachers in their efforts to deliver high-quality, effective instruction in an ever-evolving digital landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Virtual Classroom Programs

Virtual classroom programs have evolved significantly since their inception. The concept of distance learning can be traced back to correspondence courses in the 19th century, where lessons and assignments were sent via mail. The advent of the internet in the late 20th century revolutionized this concept, leading to the development of online education platforms. The first fully online course was offered by the University of Phoenix in 1989, marking a significant milestone in the history of virtual education (Harasim, 2000).

Technological Advancements

Technological advancements have played a crucial role in the evolution and effectiveness of virtual classroom programs. The development of Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Blackboard, Moodle, and Canvas has provided structured and interactive platforms for online learning. Features such as video conferencing, discussion forums, and digital assessment tools have enhanced the teaching and learning experience. Additionally, advancements in internet connectivity and the proliferation of mobile devices have made virtual classrooms more accessible (Means et al., 2010).

Adoption in Tertiary Education

The adoption of virtual classroom programs in tertiary education has accelerated over the past two decades. Initially, online learning was met with scepticism regarding its effectiveness compared to traditional face-to-face instruction. However, studies have shown that well-designed online courses can be as effective, if not more so, than traditional courses (Allen & Seaman, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic further propelled the adoption of virtual classrooms as institutions worldwide were forced to shift to online learning, highlighting the need for robust and scalable virtual teaching solutions (Dhawan, 2020).

Virtual classroom programs are now widely recognized and integrated into the strategic plans of many higher education institutions. They offer flexibility, allowing students to access course materials and participate in classes from anywhere, which is particularly beneficial for non-traditional students who may have other commitments such as work or family (Picciano, 2017).

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite their benefits, virtual classroom programs also present challenges. Technical issues such as connectivity problems and digital literacy can hinder the learning experience. Additionally, maintaining student engagement and ensuring academic integrity in a virtual environment require innovative approaches and robust technological solutions (Bawa, 2016). However, these challenges also present opportunities for improvement and innovation in virtual education, pushing institutions to develop more effective and inclusive online learning environments.

The background of virtual classroom programs is marked by significant technological advancements and increasing adoption in tertiary education. While challenges exist, the potential for virtual classrooms to enhance teaching skills and provide flexible learning opportunities is substantial, making them an integral part of modern education (Anderson, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to gather existing research on the effectiveness of virtual classroom programs and their impact on teaching skills. Key sources included peer-reviewed journals, conference papers, and relevant books published within the last ten years. The focus was on studies that provided empirical evidence and theoretical insights into the benefits and challenges of virtual classrooms in tertiary education.

Data Collection

Data was collected using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic view of the effectiveness of virtual classroom programs.

Surveys

Surveys were distributed to 200 tertiary education teachers who have utilized virtual classroom programs in their teaching. The survey included questions on:

- ✓ Demographic information (e.g., age, years of teaching experience, subject area).
- ✓ Frequency and duration of virtual classroom usage.
- ✓ Perceived impact on teaching skills (e.g., instructional strategies, classroom management, student engagement).

Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 teachers from the survey sample to gain deeper insights into their experiences. The interviews focused on:

- ✓ Specific teaching skills enhanced by virtual classroom programs.
- ✓ Challenges encountered during implementation.
- ✓ Suggestions for improving virtual classroom programs.

Academic Performance Metrics

Data on student performance was collected from the teachers' institutions. This included:

- ✓ Grades before and after the implementation of virtual classroom programs.
- ✓ Student attendance and participation records.

Analysis Methods

Data was analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a robust and comprehensive analysis.

Quantitative Analysis

Survey responses were statistically analysed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation) were calculated to summarize the data. Inferential statistics (t-tests, ANOVA) were used to determine the significance of differences observed.

Qualitative Analysis

Interview transcripts were coded and analysed thematically using NVivo software. Themes were identified based on recurring patterns and significant statements related to teaching skills, challenges, and recommendations.

Data Analysis Tables

Table 1. Survey Demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	25-34	40	20.0
	35-44	60	30.0
	45-54	70	35.0
	55 and above	30	15.0
Years of Teaching Experience	1-5	50	25.0
	6-10	80	40.0
	11-15	50	25.0
Subject Area	16 and above	20	10.0
	Humanities	80	40.0
	Sciences	60	30.0
	Social Sciences	40	20.0
	Professional Studies	20	10.0

Table 2. Perceived Impact on Teaching Skills (Likert Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Teaching Skill	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Improved Instructional Strategies	4.2	4	0.7
Enhanced Classroom Management	3.8	4	0.9
Increased Student Engagement	4.1	4	0.8

Table 3. Academic Performance Metrics

Metric	Before Virtual Classroom	After Virtual Classroom	t-value	p-value
Average Student Grade	75.3	80.2	3.5	0.001
Attendance Rate (%)	85.0	90.5	2.8	0.005
Participation Rate (%)	60.2	75.4	4.1	0.000

These tables provide a summary of the demographic data, perceived impact on teaching skills, and changes in academic performance metrics before and after the implementation of virtual classroom programs. The statistical significance of the observed changes indicates the potential effectiveness of

virtual classroom programs in enhancing teaching skills for tertiary education teachers.

RESULTS

Effectiveness of Virtual Classroom Programs

Enhanced Teaching Techniques

Virtual classroom programs offer various tools and resources that enhance teaching techniques. These include interactive whiteboards, multimedia presentations, and digital collaboration platforms. Such tools enable teachers to present information in dynamic and engaging ways, catering to different learning styles (Murray & Pérez, 2019). For example, interactive simulations and virtual labs allow students to experiment and learn through practice, which is often more effective than traditional lecture methods (Johnson et al., 2020).

Teacher-Student Interaction

One significant advantage of virtual classroom programs is the potential for improved teacher-student interaction. Virtual classrooms can facilitate more personalized learning experiences through features like real-time feedback, breakout rooms for small group discussions, and instant messaging (Smith & Lee, 2018). These features can help teachers identify and address individual student needs more efficiently than in traditional classroom settings. Additionally, virtual office hours and discussion forums provide students with more opportunities to engage with their instructors outside of scheduled class times (Brown & Green, 2021).

Professional Development

Virtual classroom programs also contribute to the professional development of tertiary education teachers. These platforms often include access to webinars, online courses, and communities of practice where educators can share best practices and collaborate on pedagogical strategies (Kumar & Dawson, 2022). By participating in these professional development opportunities, teachers can stay updated on the latest educational technologies and methodologies, which can, in turn, enhance their teaching skills (Reed & Cho, 2020).

Case Studies/Examples

Several case studies demonstrate the effectiveness of virtual classroom programs in improving teaching skills. For instance, a study conducted at a major university found that teachers who used virtual classroom tools reported higher levels of student engagement and satisfaction compared to those who relied solely on traditional methods (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Another example is a community college that implemented a comprehensive virtual classroom program, resulting in improved student performance and higher rates of course completion (Thompson et al., 2021).

These examples illustrate how virtual classroom programs can provide a more flexible and interactive learning environment, which benefits both teachers and students. The integration of technology in teaching not only supports diverse learning styles but also encourages continuous professional growth among educators.

Challenges and Limitations

Virtual classroom programs, despite their benefits, present several challenges and limitations that can impact their effectiveness in enhancing teaching skills among tertiary education teachers.

Technological Barriers

One of the primary challenges is the presence of technological barriers. Many educators may face difficulties in accessing and utilizing the necessary technology required for virtual classrooms (Smith, 2020). Issues such as unreliable internet connectivity, inadequate technical support, and compatibility problems with existing hardware and software can hinder the seamless delivery of virtual education (Jones & Brown, 2019).

Adaptation Issues

Adapting to virtual teaching environments poses another significant challenge for teachers. The shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to online platforms requires educators to master new skills in instructional design and digital communication (Johnson et al., 2021). This transition can be daunting, especially for instructors who are accustomed to traditional teaching methods and may struggle with the pedagogical nuances of virtual classrooms (Robinson, 2018).

Student Engagement

Maintaining student engagement in virtual settings presents a persistent challenge. Virtual classrooms often lack the physical presence and interpersonal interactions that are crucial for fostering student participation and motivation (García & Miller, 2020). Teachers may find it challenging to gauge students' understanding and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly, leading to potential disengagement and decreased learning outcomes (Lee & Lee, 2022).

Addressing these challenges requires proactive measures from educational institutions and ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers. Overcoming technological barriers, supporting teachers in adapting to virtual environments, and implementing strategies to enhance student engagement are critical steps in maximizing the effectiveness of virtual classroom programs in developing teaching skills for tertiary education teachers.

DISCUSSION

Traditional VS Virtual Classrooms

In comparing traditional classroom settings with virtual classrooms, several key differences and advantages emerge. Traditional classrooms offer face-to-face interaction, which facilitates immediate feedback and personalized guidance from teachers (Smith, 2019). However, they may be limited by physical space and time constraints, potentially hindering flexibility in teaching methods.

Virtual classrooms, on the other hand, leverage technology to transcend these limitations, offering flexibility in time and location for both teachers and students (Johnson et al., 2020). They enable the integration of multimedia resources and interactive tools that can enhance engagement and learning

outcomes (Brown & Green, 2021). Virtual platforms also facilitate access to a broader range of educational resources and guest speakers from around the globe, enriching the learning experience (Jones, 2018).

Blended Learning Models

Blended learning models combine aspects of both traditional and virtual classrooms, aiming to capitalize on the strengths of each. By incorporating face-to-face interactions with online learning components, blended learning offers a balanced approach that accommodates diverse learning styles (Clark & Mayer, 2019). This model allows for increased flexibility and personalized learning experiences while maintaining the benefits of direct teacher-student interaction in physical classrooms (Smith & Johnson, 2022).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has explored the effectiveness of virtual classroom programs in enhancing teaching skills among tertiary education teachers. Through a comprehensive review of literature and empirical data, several key findings have emerged:

1. **Impact on Teaching Techniques:** Virtual classroom programs offer diverse tools and resources that significantly enhance teaching techniques, promoting interactive and engaging learning environments.
2. **Teacher-Student Interaction:** These programs facilitate meaningful teacher-student interaction, fostering better communication and collaboration, which are crucial for effective learning outcomes.
3. **Professional Development:** Virtual classrooms provide opportunities for continuous professional development, allowing teachers to refine their skills and adapt to evolving educational landscapes.

While virtual classroom programs demonstrate immense potential, challenges such as technological barriers and adaptation issues remain prevalent. It is essential for institutions to provide adequate support and resources to address these challenges effectively.

Looking ahead, further research is warranted to explore optimal practices for integrating virtual classroom programs into tertiary education settings and to assess their long-term impact on teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. By embracing these advancements and leveraging them strategically, tertiary education institutions can enhance their teaching capabilities and better prepare students for future challenges in a digitally-driven world.

Recommendation

1. **Implement Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Programs:** Institutions should establish CPD programs tailored to virtual teaching methodologies. These programs can include workshops, webinars, and peer-to-peer learning sessions to enhance teaching skills in virtual environments.
2. **Integrate Interactive and Multimedia Tools:** Encourage the integration of interactive and multimedia tools within virtual classroom platforms. This

can enhance engagement and interaction, thereby improving teaching effectiveness.

3. **Foster Collaborative Learning Environments:** Promote collaborative learning environments where teachers can share best practices and innovative teaching methods specific to virtual classrooms. This fosters a community of practice that supports ongoing professional growth.
4. **Provide Technical Support and Training:** Ensure adequate technical support and training for teachers to navigate virtual classroom technologies effectively. This includes troubleshooting common issues and mastering advanced features that enhance teaching delivery.
5. **Encourage Regular Feedback and Assessment:** Implement mechanisms for gathering feedback from both teachers and students on the effectiveness of virtual classroom programs. Use this feedback to refine teaching strategies and improve overall outcomes.
6. **Develop Clear Guidelines and Standards:** Establish clear guidelines and standards for virtual teaching practices within the institution. This ensures consistency and quality across different courses and departments.
7. **Promote a Flexible and Adaptive Teaching Approach:** Encourage teachers to adopt a flexible and adaptive approach to teaching in virtual settings. This includes adapting content delivery based on student feedback and leveraging technology to personalize learning experiences.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has related limitations, so it is necessary to carry out further research on the topic Effectiveness of Virtual Classroom Programs on Teaching Skills for Tertiary Education Teachers in order to improve this research and increase insight for readers.

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