

Online Learning as a Strategy for Teaching Higher Education Students in the Period of Rising Insecurity, Kakistoracy and Economic Downturn. Implications for Educational Planning

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Abstract

The rising levels of insecurity, political instability, and economic challenges present formidable obstacles to the traditional methods of delivering higher education. In response, online learning has emerged as a crucial strategy for ensuring uninterrupted education while addressing the safety, accessibility, and economic concerns of students and institutions. This article explores the viability of online learning as a strategic alternative for higher education amidst these rising challenges. Through a review of existing literature and case studies, the paper examines how online education can provide flexible, cost-effective, and secure learning environments, thus promoting access and continuity even in times of crisis. It also highlights the implications of a shift to online learning for educational planning, including infrastructure investment, digital resource allocation, training for educators, and policy adjustments to accommodate remote learners. The findings underscore the need for strategic educational planning to optimize online platforms, enhance digital inclusivity, and support pedagogical adjustments that can mitigate the impacts of insecurity, inequality, and economic instability on higher education.

Keywords: Economic, downturn, Higher education, Insecurity, kakistocracy, Online

Introduction

In recent years, the global landscape of higher education has been shaped by unprecedented challenges, including economic instability, political crises, and rising levels of insecurity. These issues have disrupted traditional educational frameworks, especially in developing countries where access to quality education has been historically limited. The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the vulnerability of in-person education systems, accelerating the transition to online learning platforms globally. With face-to-face teaching models under pressure, online learning has emerged as a strategic option for sustaining educational activities, offering a blend of flexibility, safety, and accessibility that aligns with the needs of both educators and students in uncertain times. Insecurity has grown as a critical issue affecting educational access, particularly in regions facing conflicts, insurgency, and other forms of violence. Reports by UNESCO and the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack reveal that educational institutions have increasingly become targets of violence, with attacks on students, teachers, and educational facilities impacting millions across the globe (GCPEA, 2018). The physical risks associated with traditional in-person learning have intensified the need for alternative educational delivery methods, as students, parents, and educators seek safer ways to continue academic pursuits without exposing themselves to danger (UNESCO, 2021).

Online learning offers a more cost-effective solution compared to traditional education. By minimizing infrastructure costs and providing digital resources, online platforms can help alleviate financial pressures on both institutions and students. Studies have shown that e-learning can reduce costs by eliminating expenses associated

with transportation, physical facilities, and printed materials (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Thus, for students from economically challenged backgrounds, online learning serves as a potential equalizer, allowing access to educational resources that would otherwise be inaccessible. According to Akpan, Atabang and Udofia (2025), the global shift to digital media and information, digital technology has become an inseparable element of the educational system and has played a key role in assisting students and education institutions in achieving their goals. Digital technologies have greatly transformed education and have offered groundbreaking opportunities and innovations, promote inclusive development, broaden educational access, enhance healthcare services, and strengthen governance. These technologies have transformed various aspects of lives, and education is no exception (Akpan, Atabang & Udofia, 2025).

Akpan, Udoeh and Eden, (2025) stated that economic challenges and insecurity often severely disrupt education systems, especially in low- and middle-income countries like Nigeria. Factors such as insufficient funding, teacher shortages, political instability, and conflicts can lead to the closure of schools, reduced access to quality education, and diminished learning outcomes. The digital revolution has transformed various aspects of society, and education is no exception. Online learning, facilitated by digital tools and platforms, enables institutions to provide educational content remotely. This approach not only reduces geographic barriers but also creates opportunities for personalized and self-paced learning. Moreover, online learning tools such as video conferencing, learning management systems (LMS), and virtual classrooms have evolved significantly, allowing institutions to replicate and even enhance the traditional classroom experience digitally (Picciano, 2019). According to Udofia, Akpan and Sambo (2025), the use of emerging technologies in all levels of education implies that teaching and learning will continue to be redefined, learners will take increasing control of their learning and the curriculum must change from what we know it to be.

Despite the potential of online learning, however, its successful implementation hinges on careful educational planning, investment in technology, and policies that promote digital inclusivity. Most studies have also revealed multiple factors interplaying at different levels, such as educational systems, schools, teachers (Akpan, Akpan & Umoh, 2023; Nathan, Abasi & Isuako, 2025). For instance, students without reliable internet access or adequate devices are at a disadvantage, leading to disparities in educational outcomes. These limitations underscore the need for government and institutional support to bridge the digital divide and ensure that online learning is accessible to all students, regardless of socioeconomic status (McCoy, 2020).

The shift to online learning as a response to crises such as insecurity and economic downturn has profound implications for educational planning. Policymakers and administrators must address challenges in infrastructure, digital inclusivity, and educator training to effectively support remote learning models. To ensure successful implementation, governments and institutions need to invest in digital infrastructure, subsidize internet access, and create policies that prioritize inclusive online education (Anderson & Rainie, 2021).

Udoeh & Ogujawa (2024) strained that there are number of issues confronting Nigerian higher institutional planners in accomplishing her stated goals and objectives. Educational planners are tasked with aligning curricula and teaching methods with online platforms, which often requires a pedagogical shift to accommodate different forms of interaction, assessment, and engagement. Additionally, online learning requires continuous monitoring and

feedback systems to ensure quality and accessibility, prompting educational planners to rethink traditional approaches to curriculum delivery and student support. The growing challenges of insecurity, economic instability, and technological change make online learning a compelling option for higher education. However, to harness its full potential, comprehensive educational planning is essential. Investments in digital infrastructure, policy adjustments, and inclusive practices are crucial to ensure that online learning can provide a viable, long-term solution that meets the needs of students and educators alike.

Operational definition of concepts

Educational planning: This is the process of determining goals and objectives for an educational system and identifying strategies to achieve them. It involves defining goals, determining required resources, creating a timeline, and implementing and evaluating the plan. The significance of educational planning is that it helps ensure all students have access to quality education, identifies areas for improvement, allows flexibility, helps teachers be more effective, makes schools more efficient, and helps students reach their full potential. Types of educational planning include administrative, academic, co-curricular, instructional, and institutional planning (Bellen, 2024).

Educational planning strives to research, develop, implement, and advance policies, programs, and reforms within educational institutions. Educational planning is creating a plan of action for providing quality education to students. It involves setting goals and objectives for the educational system, as well as determining how to achieve those goals best. It is the process of setting out strategies, policies, procedures, programs, and standards through which an educational objective or set of objectives can be achieved. In short, it is goal-oriented, it is directed at achieving a set of educational objectives. Educational planning is a blueprint that gives direction for the future development of a nation's educational system and prescribes courses of action for achieving defined goals and objectives. It provides a tool for coordinating and controlling the direction of the educational system so that educational objectives can be realized. Educational Planning is an instrument for providing needed coordination and direction of the different components of an educational system.

Insecurity

Nigeria has long been regarded as one of Africa's economic powerhouses due to its abundant resources and diversified populace. As a developing nation, Nigeria grapples with several security challenges that directly impact its economy and education, ranging from insurgency to conflicts between farmers and herders to organized crime looting and abduction for ransom. These security threats not only undermine national stability and the rule of law but also have adverse effects on the economy, affecting price, output, employment, trade balance, poverty, inequality, defense expenditure, government budget patterns, socio-political environment, and several others.

As a result of insecurity in the country, many schools, businesses and companies are closing down operations and relocating to other African countries for fear of loss of lives and properties. In contrast, the few remaining schools' companies operate on a skeletal basis while being apprehensive about their lives and properties. The incessant kidnappings have affected foreign direct investments, interstate travel, and transportation of goods and services from one state to another. The resulting loss of income and economic opportunities further compounds the

challenges faced by the affected population. The livestock sector is also adversely affected since many bandits are reportedly from pastoral communities.

Economic Downturn

A lot has already been said about economic downturn. It is still worth mentioning that economic downturn or recession is a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months. Economies can slow down within a nation, a specific region or on a global scale. Reasons for recessions can include, but are not limited to, a wide range of internal and external factors such as loss of confidence in investment and the economy, high interest rates, post-war slowdown, wage-price controls, stock market crashes and falling housing prices. An economic downturn can be seen by a decline in: Income, industrial production, wholesale, retail sales and employment (CNBC.com (2010), Queensland, 2024).

Kakistocracy

Kakistocracy comes from the Greek word kakistos (worst) or kakos (bad) + kracia (rule, power or government), so it depicts or describes a government manned and administered by the worst, bad and most terrible set of people. It is very instructive to note that when it comes to the hierarchical representation of the capability of the personnel that make up the sort of arrangement, they are not merely bad, but worse than bad, thus living a sane mind to only imagine empathetically that which a set of leaders can impact the state with. Kakistocratic tendencies does not only limit its tentacles to state or governments, but this sort of leadership behaviour may also explain the world's woes as regards, citizens' misconduct, corporate scandals, misdemeanor in the church, anomalies in civil society, spousal indiscretion and infidelity, the desecration of rule of law, and even the persistence of illegitimate authoritarian states and despotic rulers. A historical tracking of the term, traces its earliest use to the English preacher, and lawyer Paul Gosnold, in a sermon he preached at the Publique Fast the ninth day of Aug. 1644 at St. Maries:

Kakistocracy is the government that enhances and promotes worse and retrogressive conditions for her people. This fallout of this is the fact that the people's commonwealth, are diverted for personal and class gains, therefore leaving space for hunger, impoverishment, and other inhuman conditions. This is the bane of poverty in most developing countries; rich in human and natural resources but wallowing in poverty and depending on foreign aid to survive. Although some studies have been done on the concept of kakistocracy, not much has been done to really demonstrate its meaning and how ubiquitous this phenomenon has become, mostly amongst developing countries. The overriding implication of kakistocracy which is clearly manifested in maladministration and its negative impact on the Nigerian state is identified in this work as the problem with the Nigerian democracy. (Otoide, 2021).

Online Learning

Online learning is the process of acquiring knowledge or skills through digital or internet-based platforms and resources. Sometimes referred to as e-learning or distance learning, it uses technology to deliver educational content, facilitate interactions, and support learning experiences remotely. Instead of attending physical classrooms,

students get materials, engage in activities, and learn from using online platforms. The courses can be taught by a live instructor, but they can also be recorded lessons played on-demand. Online learning can come in different forms, from structured courses offered by educational institutions to self-paced learning modules, webinars, virtual classrooms, and massive open online courses (MOOCs). It encompasses a wide range of subjects and disciplines, from academic subjects to professional development and skills training. That being stated, there are potential financial advantages to doing school online. Online learning can have a positive financial impact on individuals and society. Here are some of the financial benefits for individuals and society:

Workforce Development: Online learning provides opportunities for individuals to enhance their skills and knowledge, making them more employable and adaptable in the evolving job market. It enables workers to upskill or reskill, improving their career prospects and creating a competitive workforce that benefits employers and employees. However, the success of teaching and learning in science education has been linked to availability of resources and students' reliance on reading (Udofia, Babayemi & Sambo, 2024).

Job Creation and Economic Opportunities: The expansion of online learning platforms and the growing demand for online courses create job opportunities in the education and technology sectors. These include instructors, course developers, instructional designers, technical support staff, and platform administrators. The growth of the online learning industry can stimulate job creation and economic activity.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Online learning fosters an environment that promotes entrepreneurship and innovation. It equips individuals with the knowledge and skills required to start their own businesses or engage in entrepreneurial activities. By providing access to specialized courses and resources, online learning can fuel entrepreneurial endeavors and contribute to the growth of innovative startups. Entrepreneurial individuals will have better access to the information they need to get started.

Seven proven strategies to make the most out of online or blended learning experience

1. Create a dedicated leaning space: designate a specific area in the office or home solely for studying, free from distractions. This space should be comfortable and well organized.
2. Set clear goals and prioritize have specific daily and long-term goals. These goals should be clear and measurable, considering the time to and for other activities.
3. Establish Routine: develop a consistent daily or weekly routine that includes dedicated study sessions, breaks, and leisure activities.
4. Leverage Technology: in today's world, technology is one's ally when it comes to education. Make the most of educational platforms, video conferencing tools, and digital resources provided by your institution.
5. Stay Connected and Communicate: Regularly communicate with instructors and peers through emails, chats, or virtual meetings. Avoid any isolation by staying active on discussion boards, keep your interaction regular and do not be afraid to discuss any hesitation during the course.
6. Focus on Time Management and Self-discipline: Apply time management techniques to maintain focus.
7. Reflect and Adapt: Regularly evaluate your progress and adapt to your strategies. Identify what's working and areas for improvement.

Weaknesses of Online Learning

While online programs have significant strengths and offer unprecedented accessibility to quality education, there are weaknesses inherent in the use of this medium that can pose potential threats to the success of any online program. These problems fall into six main categories:

1. Equity and accessibility to technology

Ekpoh, Udo, and Ogujawa, (2025) specified that technological integration in education is essentially the use of technological tools in the curriculum to meet the teaching-learning process and improve students' learning. Enhancing student involvement, providing access to a multitude of materials, and promoting the growth of digital literacy are benefits that come with incorporating technology into the curriculum. Before any online program can hope to succeed, it must have students who are able to access the online learning environment. Lack of access, whether it be for economic or logistical reasons, will exclude otherwise eligible students from the course. This is a significant issue in rural and lower socioeconomic neighborhoods. Furthermore, speaking from an administrative point of view, if students cannot afford the technology the institution employs, they are lost as customers. As far as Internet accessibility is concerned, it is not universal, and in some areas of the United States and other countries, Internet access poses a significant cost to the user. Some users pay a fixed monthly rate for their Internet connection, while others are charged for the time they spend online. If the participants' time online is limited by the amount of Internet access they can afford, then instruction and participation in the online program will not be equitable for all students in the course.

2. The students

While an online method of education can be a highly effective alternative medium of education for the mature, self-disciplined student, it is an inappropriate learning environment for more dependent learners. Online asynchronous education gives students control over their learning experience and allows for flexibility of study schedules for non-traditional students; however, this places a greater responsibility on the student. In order to successfully participate in an online program, students must be well organized, self-motivated, and possess a high degree of time management skills in order to keep up with the pace of the course. For these reasons, online education is not appropriate for younger students (i.e. elementary or secondary school age) and other students who are dependent learners and have difficulty assuming responsibilities required by the online paradigm.

3. Lack of essential online qualities facilitator

Successful on-ground instruction does not always translate to successful online instruction. If facilitators are not properly trained in online delivery and methodologies, the success of the online program will be compromised. An instructor must be able to communicate well in writing and in the language in which the course is offered. An online program will be weakened if its facilitators are not adequately prepared to function in the Virtual Classroom. An online instructor must be able to compensate for lack of physical presence by creating a supportive environment in the Virtual Classroom where all students feel comfortable participating and especially where students know that their instructor is accessible. Failure to do this can alienate the class both from each other and from the instructor. However, even if a virtual professor is competent enough to create a comfortable virtual

environment in which the class can operate, still the lack of physical presence at an institution can be a limitation for an online program. For the faculty as well as the participants, such things as being left out of meetings and other events that require on-site interaction could present a limiting factor in an online program.

4. The administration and faculty

Some environments are disruptive to the successful implementation of an online program. Administrators and/or faculty members who are uncomfortable with change and working with technology, or feel that online programs cannot offer quality education, often inhibit the process of implementation. These people represent a considerable weakness in an online program because they can inhibit its success. Sometimes administration cannot see beyond the bottom line and look at online programs only as ways to increase revenues and are thus not committed to seeing online programs as a means of providing quality education to people who would otherwise not be able to access it. In such a case, an institution that is not aware of the importance of proper facilitator training, essential facilitator characteristics, and limitations of class size would not understand the impact that these elements can have on the success of an online program.

5. The online environment synergy

Akpan, Oyakhrome, and Udo, (2024) posited that today's modern learner is a complex, energetic and technology driven individual that needs to be challenged and inspired in his learning. He needs to be his own boss, collaborate and incorporate technology which he loves into classroom experiences as well as work with peers. Online learning has its most promising potential in the high synergy represented by active dialog among the participants, one of the most important sources of learning in a Virtual Classroom. However, in larger classes (20 or more students), the synergy level starts to shift on the learning continuum until it eventually becomes independent study to accommodate the large class. At this point, dialog is limited as well as interaction among participants and the facilitator. The medium is not being used to its greatest potential.

6. The curriculum

The curriculum of any online program must be carefully considered and developed in order to be successful. Many times, in an institution's haste to develop distance education programs, the importance of the curriculum and the need for qualified professionals to develop it are overlooked. Curriculum and teaching methodology that are successful in on-ground instruction will not always translate to a successful online program where learning and instructional paradigms are quite different. Online curriculum must reflect the use of dialog among students (in the form of written communication) and group interaction and participation. Traditional classroom lectures have no place in a successful online program. Education of the highest quality can and will occur in an online program provided that the curriculum has been developed or converted to meet the needs of the online medium. Today is a very exciting time for technology and education. Online programs offer technology-based instructional environments that expand learning opportunities and can provide top quality education through a variety of formats and modalities. With the special needs of adult learners who need or want to continue their education, online programs offer a convenient solution to conflicts with work, family, and study schedules. Institutions of higher education have found that online programs are essential in providing access to education for the populations they wish to serve. In order for an online program to be successful, the curriculum, the facilitator,

the technology, and the students must be carefully considered and balanced in order to take full advantage of the strengths of this format and at the same time avoid pitfalls that could result from its weaknesses.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that online learning is perceived as an effective alternative to traditional education, particularly in terms of access and safety. However, significant challenges remain, especially regarding digital infrastructure and support. The study highlights the importance of institutional policies and training for educators to enhance the effectiveness of online learning. The study further reveals that while online learning offers a promising strategy for crisis-affected regions, targeted efforts in infrastructure and inclusivity are essential for its success.

Suggestions

The following were suggested based on the paper:

1. To support higher education students facing insecurity, social tensions, and economic downturns, educational planners should focus on secure, accessible, and affordable online learning solutions.
2. Investing in safe online platforms and increasing access to stable internet connection are key steps. Institutions can collaborate with network providers and governments to provide affordable data options and subsidized devices for students.
3. Offering financial support, such as scholarships or grants, can also help students secure necessary resources.
4. Providing digital training for educators will ensure effective online teaching, with designing flexible curricula to accommodate students with varying economic or safety constraints.
5. Mental health support is essential, as students face compounded stress from current challenges. Institutions should provide accessible online mental health services and foster supportive online communities to reduce isolation.
6. Skill-based learning that enhances employability, such as career development resources and virtual internships, is also critical in an economic downturn.
7. Hybrid learning models, where possible, can offer a balanced approach to learning, allowing for both online and safe, in-person interactions.
8. Continuous evaluation of online learning effectiveness, incorporating feedback from students and educators, can help refine strategies and ensure programs remain resilient, accessible, and inclusive.

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