

CHALLENGES OF ATTENDING E-LEARNING STUDIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to find out what challenges the E-learner faces in the Nigerian environment. Survey research design was used to obtain the opinion of 200 randomly selected E-learners in Kaduna metropolis. Their responses revealed that the most prominent challenges they face are, Inadequate Power supply, Internet connectivity problems, Efficacy of service providers, Affordability of computer hardware, Software and other accessories, Depth of knowledge and skills of internet operation, Cost of accessing internet and production of hard copy. Of all these problems, power supply and its inadequacy ranked highest while depth internet knowledge and skills ranked last. Recommendations were made on how to solve these challenges.

Keywords: E-Learning, E-Education, E-Banking, E-Lecturing

INTRODUCTION

E-Learning, E-Education, E-Banking, E-Lecturing etc., have overwhelmed the present day teaching/learning environment. Simply defined, E-learning refers to electronic learning, a situation where the teacher employs the use of electronic gadgets to carry out the task of teaching and students through the same avenue. In like manner learning is facilitated and implemented through electronic gadgets, if the learners are computer literate.

In this system the teachers as well as the students do not see each other physically. This kind of modern teaching/learning is facilitated by what is called internet. Through the internet, individuals have access to other forms of communication channels such as the social media. For example twitter, facebook, Webb cam etc.

In Nigeria, just like any other underdeveloped countries of the world, notwithstanding the absence or inadequacy of these facilities, some individuals attempt to study by means of E-Learning. In the past, the popular form of study where the teacher and student do not have access to each other physically was by what is referred to as Study by correspondence (Leighbody and Kidd 1968)

There are two parts to E-Learning challenges. Difficulties faced in attending E-Learning studies which is primarily concerned with the student or learner and those aspects that pertains to the quality concerns of E-Education.

Specifically, when it comes to experimenting and putting into practice, learning experiences acquired during training or learning session.

This paper addresses the later. In this type of study teachers prepare study materials and mail them to the students through the regular post office referred to as snail speed system today, and the students, after attending to the materials use the same medium to reply. Although the new technology is fast and attractive there are teething problems associated with E-learning in Nigeria and other underdeveloped countries of the world.

In view of these problems this study set out to address the challenges of E-Learning in Nigeria with a view to proffering possible solutions to them. There are numerous challenges faced by any student who decides to embark on E-Learning otherwise referred to as online studies in Nigeria. Below is a list of those challenges addressed by this study which comprised the authors' personal experience and those from respondents. It should be emphasized that this is by no means exhaustive.

Purpose of the study

This study set out to find out the challenges faced by E-learners otherwise referred to as online learners by means of online study. The intention was to identify ways to proffer solutions to these challenges.

Specifically, the study determined what is referred to as E-learning, identified the main challenges faced by people who study online and proffered solutions to these identified challenges.

PROCEDURE

The study employed survey research design. 200 E-Learners were selected at random from Kaduna metropolis where the study was conducted. A questionnaire containing 50 statements which is ten statements each for the five sections was constructed to solicit information from respondents. The information sought was regarding their opinions on the challenges faced by E-Learners in Nigeria. The seriousness of the problem or phenomena was sought and respondents were asked to rate the statements which represents the perceived level of seriousness on a 5-point Likert-like rating scale.

Inadequate Power Supply

The most challenging aspect of online education in Nigeria is by all means the means of getting power supply for twenty four hours and seven days a week (24/7). Since independence in 1960 Nigeria is yet to enjoy 24/7 power supply. This very vital service has been epileptic and unreliable for most of the time. In this kind of environment it will no doubt be highly impossible to schedule lectures online with your facilitator or resource person.

Most online studies require the student to be able to stay on line at certain time of the day to receive lectures along with other students elsewhere in the virtual lecture hall. The resource person may not be able to see each student individually online. It has to be the same time. Assignments can be sent to individual box but not when it comes to virtual lectures contact sessions. The alternative power source available to an online student in Nigeria is the generation. This again is too expensive to run as the cost of petrol or diesel is beyond the reach of an average Nigerian. From experience, 4 liter of petrol runs for average of 3 to 4 hours, depending on the age of the generator.

Unless one owns a petrol station it will be impossible to supply enough petrol for fueling a genitor which can power your system. The only thing when online or learning will be possible in Nigeria without hitches is probably when the power supply situation is improve to a situation where 24/7 is possible. (Ikeagwu 1998)

Internet Connectivity

Internet service providers in Nigeria are highly exploitative they are exploitative because there is little competition. Competition can force them to bring down their connection charges. In addition their services are not the best one in the world. Lack of effective government regulation is one of the factors that give the service providers open check to exploit in all sectors. They don't care much about the quality of their services, because they can break the rules at get away with it, at least in Nigeria. The high cost of connecting internet the reasons that kept many academic staff and students from being on the net browsing to get access to the global networking of researchers. Although efficiency of the technical staff leaves much to be desired, accessing internet through paying for airtime is still very high and out of reach of most Nigerians and especially those who need it for academic purposes.

Efficacy of Service Providers

By efficacy, I mean the ability of the few service providers to provide quantitative internet service to all those that need it. On many occasions internet have been disconnected when one is very busy trying to access a site. You have to reconnect to resume your session. Sometimes it may prove difficult to resume unless you restart the system (O'Brien 2002). This turns out to be stressful and frustrating. What the author experienced in the U.S is the complete opposite.

There are times some junk sites are patronized by the service providers for reason of cheap or free subscription costs and low quality service. International regulation may be a very complicated and a messy affair, but it remains the only way quality internet service can be provided to underdeveloped and developing regions of the world just like the Interpol. Something similar can be established if there is none in place.

Affordability of Computer Hard-Ware And Software

The cost of bringing a good computer system especially branded ones is still very high and prohibitive. The cheap ones are cloned which is even against the law in other countries. When a system is cloned it is difficult to repair when there is problem. On many occasions systems have been found to be irreparable become the cloned parts are not identified or not available at all locally. When this happens, the owner has no option than to throw away that cloned system and buy either branded or another cloned and go through the same experience again, the greediness of businessmen has not helped matters. Again the absence of an effective monitoring agency has given the businessmen open check to do whatever they want to do (Levey 2000)

The software is the most abused in Nigeria. It is not uncommon, especially in the big cities where ironically the so called copyright agencies are supposed to be in full action all the time, to find some individual operate shops where nothing is sold there but pirated CD at very cheap prices less than 50G.

Due to nature of the situation under which it is obtained it is also sold cheap. As a consequence the buyer may end up with bad and unable software. Some may not install at all while others may install but will not function. The software acquisition is a nightmare in Nigeria. No operation manual or proper instruction on its usage is supplied along with the software at the point of for purchase.

Depth of Internet Knowledge and Skills

The depth of knowledge and skills in the operation of internet is a challenge to the e-learning student in Nigeria. Many students spend huge money to cyber cafe and hiring those who have good knowledge of computer and the internet to help them download and print for use as hard copy. More training on how to meet the internet the internet for accessing their training cities without much hassle is very important. Lack of adequate skills to access and navigate the internet is a very serious impediment to the success of any e-learning student.

COST OF COMPUTER HARDWARE AND INTERNET CONNECTIVITY

In the words of Levey (2000) buying hardware, software consumables service providers' charges and connection costs all require significant financial outlay which needs to be taken in consideration and budgeted for. Every e-learning or e-student requires unaffected access to the internet at all times. To make this possible the e-learner must be able to own a computer s this possible the e-learner must be able to own a computer system/desktop or laptop for 24/7 access to the use of the computer. Not only that, the student must be able to purchase airtime in order to stay connected all the time. Although the problem of power supply is there, people who have many can buy a mini power generating set to augment the epileptic power supply. This challenge can only be solved by the improvement of main power supply situation and the reduction in the cost of internet connection and airtime.

All those plethora of challenges makes it hard and difficult for the e-student in Nigeria and other developing regions of the world.

There was no significant difference in the opinion of E-learners and internet service providers on the fact that power supply is the most serious challenge faced by online students in this country.

RESULTS

The following challenges were identified as the main problems that militate against E-learning in Nigeria.

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|----|---|---|
| 1. | nadequate Power supply | I |
| 2. | nternet connectivity problems | I |
| 3. | fficacy of service providers | E |
| 4. | ffordability of computer hardware, software and other accessories | A |
| 5. | epth of knowledge and skills of internet operation | D |
| 6. | ost of accessing internet and production of hard copy | C |

| sn | Challenge | mean | SD | t-cal | t-critical | Decision |
|----|--|------|------|-------|------------|-------------|
| 1 | Inadequate Power supply | 4.5 | 10.1 | 0.9 | 1.96 | Significant |
| 2 | Internet connectivity problems | 4.0 | 9.7 | 0.8 | 1.80 | Significant |
| 3 | Efficacy of service providers | 3.5 | 11.2 | 0.9 | 1.7 | Significant |
| 4 | Affordability of computer hardware, software and other accessories | 3.0 | 8.9 | 0.7 | 1.0 | Significant |
| 5 | Depth of knowledge and skills of internet operation | 3.0 | 12.4 | 0.9 | 1.6 | Significant |
| 6 | Cost of accessing internet and production of hard copy | 3.5 | 9.5 | 0.8 | 1.7 | Significant |

Df=1, at 0.05 level of significance, two tailed.

RECOMMENDATION

- Power supply needs to be improved and made 24/7 to enable e-learners have unimpeded access to power supply for powering their system anytime they need to. It should be borne in mind that most of the e-teachers and facilitators are from regions of the world where power supply is 24/7.
- Cost of computer hard ware, soft ware and the internet connectivity must be brought down. If e-learners are to be able to own their own system for convenience. This will also cut down on the cost of hiring people download and print from the cyber cafes.
- Intensive internet training should be organize around the country to help intending students acquire internet knowledge and skills. In fact internet knowledge and skills should be taught in all secondary schools so that by the time a child graduates from a secondary school, he/she can use the Internet. This is important just in case such student gets employed he/she can pursue his/her studies even up to PhD online, while continuing his/her work.

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Dr. Stephen ZIRA BUGI was born in Yamble Village, Michika LGA of Adamawa State, Nigeria. He had his Primary School Education at CBM Primary School, Jigalambu, Bazza, and Mbororo Primary School Michika LGA; Government Craft School Numan, all in Adamawa State; Government Technical College, Maiduguri, Borno State; Kaduna Polytechnic Kaduna State for his ND & HND. On completing his NYSC, he joined the defunct Gongola Educational Resource Center as Head of Technical/Printing Department. He served in this capacity up to when he left for further studies in the United States of America where he obtained BSc. Vocational Technical Education, Graphic Arts Technology; M.Sc. Degree in Technical Teacher Education Printing. On arrival in 1990 he served briefly with the Educational Resource Center, Yola. He moved to Pacific Printers Nig. Ltd. (A subsidiary of Nigeria Security Printing & Minting Company, Lagos) as Deputy Production Services Manager. Later Heritage Press, Abuja employed him, to start the ultramodern printing house as Commercial Printing Manager.

He moved to the Democrat Newspapers, as the Deputy Production Manager – a post he held before opting for the academic job. He obtained his PhD in Industrial Technical Education from the University of Nigeria Nsukka in 2007. He was the Head of Printing Technology, Department Kaduna Polytechnic for about five years (2003-2008). In 2009/2010, he attended a Visiting International Scholar (VIS) Program with Pittsburg State University, USA. Currently, he is a Lecturer with the National Open University of Nigeria, (NOUN) Kaduna Study Centre, Nigeria. He has written several books which include but not limited to the following: Print Salesmanship, Techniques of writing and supervising project proposal, Quality Consideration in Print Production Processes, Techniques of Teaching in Career and Technical Education (CTE), Practical Manual for the Training of Offset Press operators, Print Production Planning. His main research at present is Digital image measurement (DIGIMMETRICS)

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