Integration of Web-Based Learning into Higher Education Institutions in Uganda: Teachers’ Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This article reports on the barriers encountered by teachers and the possible solutions to the integration of web-based learning (WBL) into higher educational institutions in Uganda. A total of 50 teachers in the departments of ICT, management, and social sciences from five different universities were purposively selected. A self-designed questionnaire was adapted to collect participants responses. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze data. The findings indicate that teachers had a positive attitude to incorporate WBL into teaching and learning process, but they encountered some difficulties which were identified as slow internet speeds, insufficient web-based tools, lack of technical support, etc. It further identified possible enablers to overcome these difficulties and provides empirical evidence of incorporating new knowledge in the existing literature. It also provides recommendations in terms of overcoming difficulties to enhance and incorporate WBL in teaching and learning contexts of higher education in Uganda particularly and developing countries in general.

KEYWORDS

Barriers, ICT, Teaching and Learning, Web-Based Learning

INTRODUCTION

Due to uptake of information and communication technology (ICT) and the accumulative salutation of the value of ICT on teaching and learning today, many educational institutes are using the web in various ways to promote teaching and learning (Chowdhury, 2009; Goktas et al, 2009; Jamieson-Proctor, Romina, Burnett, Paul C., Finger, Glenn, & Watson, 2006; Keengwe, Onchwari, & Wachira, 2008; X. Liu & Pange, 2014; Tezer & Ertarkan, 2010; Tezer & Karasel, 2009; Yılmaz, 2010). The web is offering many opportunities for enhancing quality teaching and learning in educational contexts in many developed countries (Hadjerrouit, 2010; Mioduser, Nachmias, Oren, & Lahav, 1999). Web based learning (WBL) is frequently called online learning or e-learning because it includes online course content (Avouris, Goutis, Markellos, Markellou, & Tsakalidis, 2003; Moore, Dickson-deane,
& Galyen, 2011; Nam & Smith-jackson, 2007). It also includes discussion forums, videoconferencing, live lectures and more advanced features available in educational software through the web. 

A large number of studies have shown positive effects of using WBL in supporting and providing education opportunities (S. H. Khan & Markauskaite, 2016; Abu Bakar Nordin & Norlidakis, 2013). More particularly, its usage as an educational agent or a tool has given learners and educators a wider range of new and interesting learning experiences and teaching atmospheres that is not possible in traditional face-to-face environments (Liu, 2011; Jang, 2006). For example, it overcomes physical distances by facilitating the teaching of students scattered across different practice places; learners have access to courses via online or learning management system (LMS) which enable them to reduce travel time and costs, encourages interaction (asynchronous or synchronous) between students and instructors (Abu Bakar Nordin & Norlidakis, 2013), it offers flexibility in timing of participation that learners can have access to the course content anytime and anywhere (Abu Bakar Nordin & Norlidakis, 2013), it offers individualized learning by enabling learners to study more extremely inspired by their areas of concern and learn at their own pace (Kituyi & Irene, 2013; Cook, 2007), WBL simplifies assessment and documentation by enabling immediate feedback (Cook, 2007; MacLaren, 2004); enables students to participate in discussions at any time and encourages those who are shy during face-to-face classroom situation to learn; provide information and interactions (L. Liu, 2007), also provides virtual environment for learning and digital repositories (MacLaren, 2004). Considering its prospective benefits, the use of WBL, therefore, has entered into conventional teaching practices in higher education institutions. In recent years, many educational institutions in the developed world have invested in WBL to support the education system (Nam & Smith-jackson, 2007). However, despite these growing demand and achievements of WBL to expand teaching and learning opportunities, the developing countries like Uganda have not fully optimized their use and benefits in higher education (Kituyi & Irene, 2013; Pajo & Wallace, 2001). On the other hand, there are many studies found concerning uptake of WBL in developed countries such as New Zealand (Pajo & Wallace, 2001), Singapore and Australia (McLoughlin & Luca, 2002), Scotland (Roberts, 2003), United States (Cook, 2007; David, A & Dupras, M, 2004), Finland (Ifinedo, 2006), Netherlands (Mahdizadeh & Mulder, 2008), Canada (Kay, 2011), Malaysia (Abu Bakar Nordin & Norlidakis, 2013), and many other developed countries. Therefore, research is needed to find out the possible reasons hindering the initiative of integrating WBL in Uganda. As yet, none of the studies have been conducted focusing on identifying challenges faced by the teachers while incorporating WBL in their teaching and learning contexts. More importantly, the related works that have been conducted on barriers to the implementation of WBL are found mainly from the developed countries as earlier stated. The barriers encountered in the developed countries may not totally be the same in nature as those in developing countries like Uganda. Hence, there is a growing demand to conduct a study to fill this emerging gap. In order to fill this void, the main aim of this paper is to identify main challenges faced by teachers and to find out the possible remedial measures for the integration of WBL in higher education system of Uganda. In order to translate these aims, the following two research questions were set for this study:

1. What are the perceived barriers to teachers in integrating WBL?
2. What are the possible enablers to overcome these constraints?

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is Web-Based Learning (WBL)?

In the literature, web-based learning is broadly interpreted. There is still much debate about the definition of WBL. Some researchers define it as a self-paced learning platform. For instance, Syh-Jong Jang, (2006) defines web-based learning as an environment which is based on the constructivism
Learning Through Sharing and Regulation: A Case Study of Using Web-Supported Collaborative Learning with Initiation and Self-Regulated Learning
Chia-Wen Tsai and Yi-Fen Chen (2011). International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies (pp. 24-34).
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