Internet Usage Among University Lecturers in Southern Nigeria

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of faculty affiliation and teaching experience on the use of the Internet by faculty members in six first generation universities in Southern Nigeria. A total of 476 faculty members from nine faculties across the six universities participated in the study. The data for the study was collected by means of a questionnaire survey and this was deemed appropriate as it allowed the views of all the participants to be sought on a Likert-type scale options. The results of this study provide a number of insights: (a) the faculties of engineering, science and arts in that order were the foremost users of the Internet for instructional purposes; (b) the faculties of Education and Agriculture were the least experienced in the use of the Internet; (c) faculty members with less than five years teaching experience use the Internet more than the older faculty members. Recommendation was made that universities in Nigeria should invest more in ICT facilities.

Keywords: educational technology; information communication technology (ICT); Internet usage

Introduction

In recent years, information and communication technology (ICT) has impacted on all aspects of society. The glaring potential of the computer for education is enormous and experts in the field have long recognized this (Stonier & Conlin, 1985). In the developed countries of the world, technology has revolutionized the way work is done and the Internet has reduced the world considerably to the much talked about global village. Also, the use of ICT is increasing in schools though its application is still very varied. It has also been ascertained that the use of ICT in the developed countries in teaching subjects across the curriculum is increasing but good practices are not common (Tearle, 2003). There is no doubt that with its introduction into educational practices, ICT has widened the scope of opportunities in secondary and tertiary levels of education. The changes
in teaching and learning which ICT has brought into the classroom pose a special challenge to all categories of teachers and students and it is their prerogative to seek ways and means of maximizing its potential for the benefit of all. The high expectation of the role of ICT in teaching and learning placed a particular responsibility on the present day teacher to evolve good practice in utilizing ICT in schools.

In recent years, many researchers (Andrews, 1997; Hoffman; 1996; Tearle 2003) studied several aspects of ICT implementation in schools and their works are of particular relevance to this study. These studies have emphasized the strong feeling that individual staff in educational institutions in the developed countries wanted to keep striving for excellence in applying ICT in teaching and learning. The process of ICT implementation has important characteristics which include paying specific attention to preparation and planning, access to resources, shared responsibility, training, and support.

In the developed countries of the world, there are good examples of schools where ICT is regularly used by almost all staff working in all curriculum areas to enhance teaching and learning. However, in the developing countries, such as Nigeria, the specific realm of ICT frequent usage is located outside the educational setting. For instance, the banking sector, oil and gas exploration and processing, communication (the global system for mobile communication) and many other private sector driven aspects of the economy have all embraced ICT and integrated it into their workplaces.

Higher education in Nigeria faces great challenges in response to changes in its internal and external environment and this include the issue of widening access to educational technology, particularly how to integrate ICT into educational practices. The lack of access to information technology and its requisite skills contributes to an inability to compete in the mainstream economy and mobility to participate meaningfully to civil society. Lack of access to information technology impedes success in academic pursuit, the skills necessary to work in knowledge driven society, and ability to prosper in modern society.

Already the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) at a meeting held at Ibadan and reported in the Guardian Newspapers Nigeria Ltd of July 23, 2002, indicated that there is a manifest mismatch between formal education system, especially university education in Nigeria, and the needs of employers, especially in the manufacturing sector. This according to the association portends grave danger for the growth of value — added industry in the country. The association further stressed that “a proper mix between vocational education and industry requirements has not been achieved” (Guardian Newspapers, Nigeria Limited, 2002). It was also observed that the current floppy manpower training and development scheme has greatly reduced the possibility of industry’s utilization of graduates of tertiary institutions over the last few years. Consequently, the Nigerian universities were challenged to provide the leadership to transform the Nigerian society and the economy through the relevance of its knowledge and skills.

Since, functional education, that is, the development of relevant skills, science, and technology, hold the key to rapid and sustainable economic growth, the transmission of knowledge and relevant skills, become the major challenge of Nigerian universities. The universities in the country can not