Chapter 43

Students’ Evaluation of a MOODLE Resource in the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents an exploratory study on students’ evaluation of a MOODLE teaching and learning resource (the Wiki in this case) in the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria. 85 students (11 female and 74 male) were guided in the use of a wiki website for language learning in a context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Data on their opinions on the resource was collected through questionnaires and feedback on the wiki. T-test was employed in data analysis and the results revealed that in spite of the challenges encountered in using the website, the students’ attitude towards using it was positive as they were enthused about using the novel approach for research and learning purposes. The results also indicated that there was no significant difference between the opinions of male and female respondents. Challenges associated with the use of the resource are highlighted and recommendations presented.

INTRODUCTION

The new knowledge technologies have maximized teaching and learning opportunities and have been used to configure patterns of social interactions in the classroom. Bill Gates (cited in Ker, 2006) rightly concludes that the information superhighway will transform education in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. The global, expansive nature of online resources allows for simultaneous delivery of pedagogic content to learners in all parts of the world and enhances widespread use of web-based instruction and e-learning opportunities. The new media have been responsible for rapid technological advancement and development in this age and they have remained at the centre spread of global socio-economic change. More importantly, they have been used to maximize both teaching and learning opportunities in both first and second language situations and in the teaching of EAP which is the major concern in this work.
Empirical research in some parts of the world (Dougiamas & Taylor, 2003; Kol & Schcolnik, 2008; Lixun, 2004; Nash, 2008) reveals that a technology-enhanced teaching/learning experience is a useful way of encouraging collaborative work, learner autonomy and helping students acquire both language and research skills. Studies of this nature are yet to gain currency in research and pedagogic practice in Africa except for report on its pedagogic application in the University of Botswana, Botswana (Alimi, 2008) and in the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria (http://www.futagns.pbwiki.com). Another instance of the pedagogic use of the technology is provided in the Virtual Institute for Higher Education Pedagogy (VIHEP) program put in place by the National Universities Commission, the regulatory body for university education in Nigeria. The program provides academics in Nigeria with internet-based training in modern methods of teaching in tertiary education and opportunities for academic and professional development.

Ways that Nigerian students successfully used global technologies in spite of the challenges they faced are illustrated in this paper; an overview of these challenges and recommendations are also presented.

Globalization and Appropriate Methodologies in Tertiary Education: A Challenge for Nigeria

Lubbers and Koorevaar (1999, cited in Aborisade, 2005) define globalization as:

a process in which geographical distance becomes a factor of diminishing importance in the establishment and maintenance of cross-border economic, political and socio-cultural relations... The potential internationalization of relations and dependencies creates opportunities, but also causes fear, resistance, action and reactions (p. 2).

Globalization is closely linked with higher education: both have universal missions which is the dissemination of knowledge. The pursuit and advancement of knowledge are based on the free circulation of ideas across several boundaries, scientific fields and academic disciplines. Globalization has an intrinsic unifying potential yet it is affected by forces which foster digital divide which in turn results in animosities, intolerance, terror and violence, and increased human insecurity. Higher education too has immense benefits: it is widely acknowledged that it can address the major challenges that the world is currently facing: inequalities, poverty, environmental degradation, climate change, pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, gender imbalance in Science and Technology (SciTech) etc. Societies that do not pay sufficient attention to its higher education suffer social, economic, political consequences as well as scientific and developmental marginalization and exclusion.

Though immense benefits accrue from globalization, it does not encourage sustainable development as it leaves developing nations in deficit economically, socially, culturally and technologically. Furthermore, issues of poverty and underdevelopment prevent many Nigerians from gaining access to computers, for instance, Adegbija (2004) observes that more than 90% of Nigerians have no access to computers, the Internet and other technological facilities and only about 20% of Nigerians demonstrate competence in the English language which is the language of technology.

Language teaching/learning and technology have become inseparable; technology too has become the backbone and livewire of contemporary language teaching methodologies (Adegbija, 2004). As mentioned above, developing economies stand to gain from a technology-based environment and must therefore be well positioned for globalization and the knowledge economy. The ICTs have a pervasive effect on higher education and the latter is positioned by the international
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