Perceived Readiness of Teachers for Online Education in the

University of Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria.

Nwokike Obinna

Information Resources Management, Babcock University

Ogun state, Nigeria

Email; 0nwokike@gmail.com

Chiemeka Ihekoronye Promise

Educational Technology Department, University of Ibadan

Oyo State, Nigeria

Email; emynet@yahoo.com

Abstract

The necessary skills and a good understanding of information and communication technologies is required for designing and implementing any appropriate policy for the use of online education in teaching, learning and research in the university.

This study investigated the perception of teachers toward online education in faculty of Education, University of Ibadan. The findings revealed that teachers had a positive perception toward online education due to their perceived value of online education. More so, it revealed a positive organizational facilitation toward online education usage. It highlighted the current benefits/drawbacks of using online education for teaching, learning and research in the faculty

The study indicates that there is the need for appropriate review of information and communication policies, training programmes and infrastructural support our teachers in exploiting the use of online instruction in their faculty.

Keywords; perceived readiness, teachers, online education.

1. **Introduction**

Currently among Nigerian-Universities, the level of acquisitions of information and communication technologies' (ICTs) and use is perceived as quite high as observed from massive empirical reports. A few had disagreed to this assertion and point out that in acquiring ICTs, Universities exhibit blind faiths in technology, a sort of technological determinism seeming to suggest that merely installing a machine will lead to its efficient and rational use. This perception of technological determinism seemed to prevail in the process of acquiring and providing access to ICTs in Nigeria universities. There had been reports of universities that acquired Information

and Communication equipment even before deciding what to do with them. Information and Communication equipment with internet access were purchased and had never been personally utilized by their academic staff for a variety of reasons (Hopkins 1996, Adagunodo and Popoola, 2003)

This paper sought to investigate the perceived readiness of teachers for online education in the faculty of Education, University of Ibadan so as to enable the university authorities to formulate policies that would enhance the process of acquisition and use of ICTs for online education.

2.   Review of Literature

Studies of Nigeria universities had become widespread especially towards investigating their acquisition and use of Information and Communication equipment. During the past two decades, several studies investigated both the use and non use of Information and Communication equipment in Nigerian universities, research institutes and libraries. A study had indicated that librarians were highly positive in their attitudes towards the use of computers. The gender, age, length of service and type of library were not significantly related to the attitudes of librarians towards computers. Frequency of use of computer and previous training experience in the use of computers were however significantly related to positive attitudes towards computers. In addition, frequency of use of computers has no significant relationship with place of training as librarians, type of library where they worked, and subject background of the librarians. (Klowu, 1997)

Another study investigating the prevalence and correlation of computer anxiety, phobia, obsession and work stress among students and staff of the University of Ibadan, researchers reported an inverse correlation of computing experience with information anxiety, computer phobia and obsessive computing. They also found that discipline, occupation and self-esteem were significant factor for explaining computer experience while age, locus of control and personality types were not (Tiamiyu, Ajayi and Olatokun, 2002). On investigating the impact of information and communication technologies on scholarly publications of scientists of university of Ibadan, Sangowusi (2003) found that even through 76% of the lecturers were computer literate and 33.5% have been using ICTs for over five years, only 32.8% owned a personal computer. He also found that ICTs had made very little impact on the productivity of scientist, especially those in the rank of professor. He concluded that professors seemed to be overwhelmed by teaching and administrative chores which allowed them very little time for research using ICT.

Some of the studies of ICT use in Nigerian Universities were not detailed enough to enable one make general conclusions about factors that significantly influence ICT acquisition and use for online education. For example, Ehikhamenor, (2001) investigated the use and non-use of internet facilities by scientists in ten Nigerian Universities and found 4.4% of the scientists had computers at their disposal while 50.4% had access to, and were using the internet. His study attributed non-use of the internet to problems of accessibility, ease of use and cost. He also reported that the university in which a scientist worked might have had the greatest effect among the background factors that influenced the data in his study. In addition, he found significant different in internet use by scientists in different age groups, academic ranks, and disciplines.

Jumba (2000) found no relationship between attitudes towards online education by Scientists in six Nigerian agricultural research institutions and the value they derives from ICTs use. They also found no significant relationship between accessibility to ICTs and research productivity of the Scientists. However, there was a significant association between the value derived from frequency of ICTs use and research experience of respondents in his study.

Even an international study that was sponsored by the United Nations, compared internet use by academics in four Nigerian and six Kenyan Universities with a view to understanding the dynamics of ICT use in academic research, teaching and information dissemination. They found that 87.7% of the Nigerian respondents in their study used computers while the figure for the Kenyan respondents was 98.2%. In addition, they found that computer use among Nigerian University academics had become rampant as they received formal training in the use of computers and the internet.

Among the two study groups, word-processing was more widely used computer application followed by e-mail. Kenyan University academics also used computers for a wider variety of tasks than their Nigerian counterparts, use of, and access to the internet also differed among the two groups. Kenyans tended to access the internet more from their offices while Nigerians accessed the internet more from either other access points within their universities or from cyber cafés. In addition, unlike the Nigerians, none of the Kenyans respondents accessed the internet from their homes or from friends/colleagues' places. The study concluded that even though academics in the two universities had access to the cluster of technologies that make up the internet, there were differences in the speed, ease and quality of access to the internet. Constraints to internet use also varies, Cost was the highest constraints to the Nigerians while availability of affordable internet connection was the highest constraints to the Kenyans (Adeya and Oyeyinka, 2002).

2.1 *Online Education*:

Today, the world is witnessing an expansion in distance education as a result of the provision of a broad range of options for its implementation through information and communication technologies evident in the advances in computer, networking technologies and World Wide Web. The convergence of telecommunication and computer technologies had enabled academic institutions in several parts of the world; provide flexible open learning environments for students, via online distance learning. This had given rise to concepts such as Electronic Universities or Virtual Universities, which emerge at a fast pace. This was an indication that distance learning as a means of providing higher education would continue to grow. Online education via the web (e-learning) as a means of approaching distance learning in Nigeria could not be overlooked, since it provided a cost-effective and quick method of communication between learners and the teachers. (Ahmed 2006).

Online education had been used as an all encompassing term that referred to training done with a computer over a network, including an organization's intranet, local area network and the internet. As its name implied, online education referred any technology-based learning usually linkage to a computer or net-based training. Studies

indicated that varying levels of sophistication existed in online education that could extend from a basic online learning program that included text and graphics of the course, exercises, testing and record keeping, such as test scores and book marks to an even more sophisticated online learning program. Sophistication would include animations, simulations, audio and video sequences peer and expert discussion groups, online mentoring, links to electronic information resources on corporate intranet or the web, and communications with corporate education records. Hence, online learning constituted just one part of online education and described learning via internet, intranet and extranet (Hubona & Geitz, 1997, Autzen, 2007 Moron & Kim, 2001).

Given the broad definition of online education, it would seem safe to assume that web-based training was online learning since web-based training involved instruction that was delivered over the internet or over a company's intranet. Online learning had been described as the process of learning via computers over the internet and intranets. Prior study, noted that e-leaning was also referred to as web-based training, online training, distributed learning or technology for learning. E-learning was defined as a learning process that met three criteria: a geographical distance separated communication between the trainer and participant; the communication was a two way interactive with some form of technology used to facilitate the learning process. E-learning took the form of complete courses, access to content, access to components and services and the separation of "courses" to acquire and test knowledge. Thus, web-based training, online learning, e-learning, online instruction, distributed learning, interest-based learning and net-based learning all spoke of the same thing (Hall, 1997, 2000, Hall and Snider 2008).

Online education was described as inclusive and synonymous to all computer-related applications, tools and processes that had been strategically aligned to value-added learning and teaching processes. This included to the delivery of content via all electronic media, including the internet, intranet, extranets, satellite broadcast, audio/video tape, interactive TV and CD-ROM. however, e-learning was defined more narrowly than distance learning, which would including text-based learning and courses conducted via written correspondence. E-learning covers a wide set of applications and processes, including computer-based learning, web-based leaning, virtual classrooms, digital collaborations (Hall and Snider, 2000; Urban and Weggen 2000).

Online education involves a continuum from basic use of technology in or around the conventional physical classroom to wholly online delivery. This involved the art of using internet; electronic information resources, computer and other technologies to enhance teaching process or learning process. Online education requires tools such as computer and the internet (e.g. use of a course management system to distribute electronic information resources and track grades) to be used creatively for collaborative learning at anytime and anywhere. Sofoluwe (2003) pointed out that online leaning would be useful for information resources provision, developing capacity to support a range of communication strategies and cost effectiveness. This enables sharing of knowledge, lesson plan, research project and notes. Apart from teachers and students, online education involved parents, field experts, international students, teachers and society via the internet, anytime and anywhere.

Although the Online education is viewed as a welcome development in Higher Education systems especially in this current information age, a few may still have some reservations or even view it as threat. New technologies associated with online-learning may create opportunities and threats to the institutional structure of Higher Education, especially the learning patterns of individuals and learning certification systems. Online education offers the potential for more accessibility, flexibility and cost-efficiency in higher education. This will enable teachers to teach large number of student in a more effective manner thereby allowing them (teachers/academics) to concentrate their limited time on activities that ICTs cannot replace, such as mentoring and problem solving (McIntosh et al 2006). Online education also challenges the information literacy skills of teachers.

2.2 *Limitation;*

This study did not explore any actual online teaching and learning practices, but the responses were related to recent issues that may or may not be sustainable. In addition, the study did not survey students for their perceptions of online educational trends and possibilities.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted an ex-post-facto survey design covering a cross-section of teachers in all the departments of faculty of Education, University of Ibadan. Data collected were subjected to factor analysis; which is a statistical approach that can be used to analyze interrelationship among a large number of variables and to explain these variables in terms of their common underlying dimension (factors).

4.0   Results

4.1 *Research Question One*
What is the preparedness of the faculty environment toward online education?

**Chart 4.1: Perceived readiness for online education.**
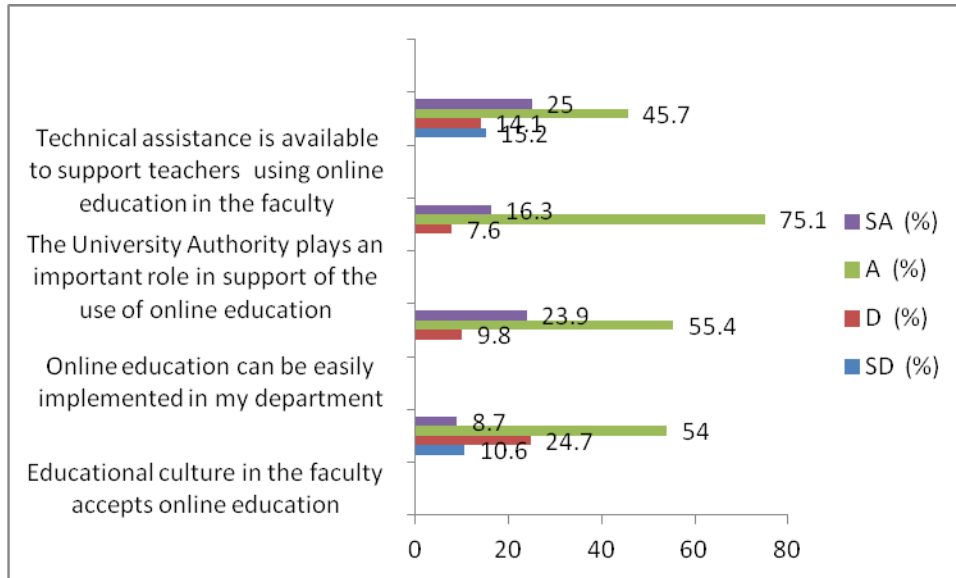
The lecturers agreed that the culture in the faculty was ready for online education (54%). They also agreed that the online education could be implemented in the department (55.4%); they agreed that the University Authority played an important role in support of the use of online education (75.1%) and agreed that there were technical assistance for teacher to use online education in the Faculty (45.7%). This showed that

    (i)   Online education was welcomed in the various departments

    (ii) there was adequate support from the University Authority for online education

    (iii) There was availability of Technical assistance for teacher to use online education.

4.2 *Research Question Two*

What was the perceived benefit/drawback of using online instruction for teaching/ learning and research among teachers?

Chart 4.2: The Perceived benefits and drawbacks of using online education.
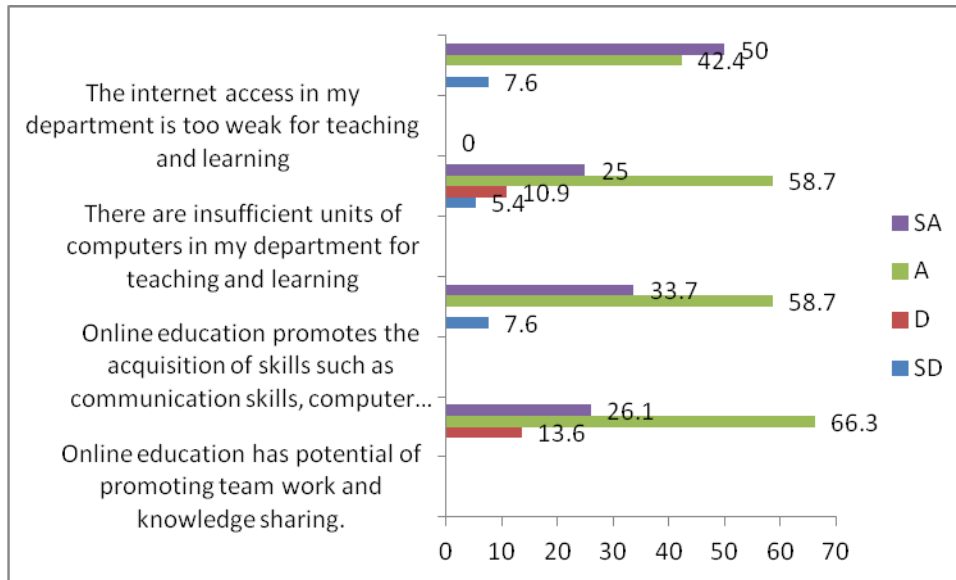
The chart showed that the lecturers agreed that online education had potential of promoting team work and knowledge sharing (66.3%); they also agreed that it was able to promote the acquisition of skills (58.7%). This implied that the perceived benefits were: (i) the potentials of promoting teamwork and sharing knowledge (ii) promoting the acquisition of skill (e.g. communication skills, computer skill and problem solving skills).

The chart also showed that the lecturers agreed that there were insufficient numbers of computer units in their departments for teaching and learning (58.7%). They also agreed that there were insufficient internet access in their departments for teaching and learning (50%). This implied that the perceived drawbacks for online education in Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan were: (i) insufficient number of computer for teaching and learning in the departments (ii) insufficient electronic information resources (iii) Insufficient internet access in the department.

5.0 Findings;

The value attached to something makes it worthwhile so that perceived value placed on online education makes it more effective in the teaching and learning process in the faculty. It appears that the respondents in this study are convinced about the positive outcome for the use of ICT in Teaching and learning. Findings from the study showed positive perception of teachers on their value associated with the use of online education.

Findings from the study showed that there are perceived benefits like team work, sharing knowledge and promoting the acquisition of skills like communication skills, computer skills and problem solving skill. The drawbacks revealed by the findings are the insufficient number of computer, insufficient electronic information resources and insufficient internet access in the department for teaching and learning

5.1 *Implication of the Findings*;

The findings from this study brought a number of issues to light.

- There is an obvious need for Universities to adopt a proactive approach to the issue of integrating online education into the job functions of our Nigeria University teachers. The current technological deterministic approach is obviously flawed as this study has shown that by simply providing computers or internet access does not ensure that the equipment will either be used at all or used effectively by these lecturers.
- Organizational facilitation especially towards the use of online education by teachers is important. Their needs have to be catered for in the University especially the need to provide functional resource centers where teachers who have problems (with information and communication equipment or software) can go and receive prompt attention whenever they run into problems.
- Another implication of this is the need to ensure that teachers are equipped with the skills to effectively, search, retrieve and evaluate materials from the internet and they can also serve as role models of effective internet use and help train peers, aside from formal training programmes that might be organized by the University.

Over all, the findings indicates the need for a review of existing policies, training programmes and infrastructural support, to help teachers fully exploit this technology in teaching, learning and research in universities across Nigeria.

6.0 Conclusions;

It can be concluded from this study that the teachers have the right perception for online education as they are aware of the perceived benefits and usefulness in the educational system. Although personal issues like time constraints, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and low enthusiasm are a relatively common phenomenon, awareness, capacity building and enabling environments should be provided to encourage the use of online education among teachers in Nigeria Universities.

References

Adeya and Oyelearan-Oyeyinka, 2002 The Internet in African Universities: Case studies from Kenya and Nigeria. Study carried out for the Institute of New Technologies (INTECH), United Nations University, Maastricht, and The Netherlands: UNN / INTECH 100 – 109p.

Agbonlahor, R. O. 2005. Utilization levels and Attitudes towards Information Technology among University lecturers (Doctor of Philosophy) Africa Regional Centre for Information Science, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Thesis 102 – 181p.

Ahmed, H. 2006 "The impact of erectness on e-Government in Developing Nations – case study of Egypt" proceedings of the 17th Information Resources Management Association International Conference on Emerging Trends and Challenges in Information Technology Management. Washington DC, USA, 21 – 24 May 2006.

Ajayi, A., Olatokun, W. M. and Tiamiyu, M. A. (2001), Computer anxiety, phobia, obsession and Work stress at the University of Ibadan: part 1 – prevalence and correlates. African Journal of Libraries, Archives and Information Science, 11 (2), 167 – 183p.

Auzten, B (2007), Quality of usage as a neglected aspect of information technology acceptance. Retrieved May 30, 2010 from http://wifol.bwl.uni-mannheim.de/fileadmin/files/publications/working paper 2007 Quality of usage.pdf

Berge, Z. L. 1998. Conceptual frame works in Distance Training and Education. In Schreiber, D. A. and Berge, Z. L. (eds.), Distance Training: How innovative Organizations are using technology to maximize learning and meet business objectives. (Pp.13 -36). San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.

Hall, B. (2000). New Study seeks to bench-mark enterprises with world-class e-learning in place. E-learning 1(1)18-29.

Hall, B., and Snider, A. (2000). Glossary: The hottest buzz words in the industry.

Hopkins, J. D. (1996). Information Technology and the Information Society in Europe: expectations and barriers to the Implementation of New Media in Higher Education and Research Sector. Deploy project summary Report, August 1996. Prepared for the Confederation of European Union Reactor's Conference. Retrieved January 4, 2000 from http://www.uta.fl/FAST/JH/iteurope.html

Moron, J.W. and Kim, Y.G (2001), Extending the TAM for a world-wide context. Information and Management. 38, 217 – 230.

Mclntosh, N., Olivera, E., Sullivan, R. and Whitson, T. (2006), Impact of Information Technology on Medical School Faculty, Performance. An Impact of Information on Higher Education Virtual Seminar Review Series. Baltimore, JHPIEGO Corporation. 26 – 39.

Sofoluwe, A.O (2003), integrates online learning to distance education in Nigeria. Retrieved from
http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/journals/education/nijef/march_2003/INTEGRATION_OF_ONLINE_LEARNI
NG_INTO_DISTANCE_EDUCATION_IN_NIGERIA.pdf

Urban, T. A. and Weggen, Z. (2000), corporate e-learning: Exploring a New Frontier Webber, C. G. et al. Journal of
Software, Vol. 2 No. 1. Retrieved on 18th August, 2010 from
http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/51877042809004601.on