THE USE OF THE INTERNET AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF OF DELTA STATE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the use of the internet amongst the academic staff of the Colleges of Education in Delta State. The survey technique was adopted for this study. The sampling technique used was the proportion stratified sampling design. Therefore the sample was stratified into three groups. COE Agbor, COE Warri and COE Mosogar. Sample selected was 106 representing 20% of the total academic staff in the college. The data for the survey was collected between November and December, 2009 through the use of structured questionnaire which was administered on 106 lecturers of Delta State Colleges of Education. Results showed that lecturers make use of educational databases and search engine in locating information. They also make use of electronic mail, the worldwide web in conducting research and teaching. Based on the various findings of this study, there is need for establishment of the ICT department in the library and the employment of skilled manpower into the department among other things.

Keywords: Internet usage, academic staff, colleges of education, library, database

INTRODUCTION

The internet has been increasingly involved in human affairs to the extent that every government, institutions, industrialist, international and national organization as well as individual is duly establishing its presence on the internet for the purpose of effective information dissemination and services delivery. Madu and Adeniran (2005) noted that the internet developed from a United States Department of Defense project, during the cold war years. Precisely, the internet started in 1969 under a contract by the Advanced Research Project Agency (ARPA) whose major objective was to connect major computers at the universities in the South Western United State. The internet at it early stage was also to ensure that there was no break in communication at that critical period of cold war even if some of the sites were destroyed by nuclear attack (Ibegwam, 2002). It is very interesting that technology that first started as a military strategy a long time ago has become a household name globally. Internet has burst into international science playing increasingly ever wide roles in all aspect of life. Internet today has increased to a level that every enlightened mind desires to have at least an e-mail address.

Today, new development brought about by information and communication technology is increasing; it provides users with the privilege of exploring the world from his office, library, even at home in search for information. This could not have been possible where there is no computer, which is a desired prerequisite for internet

connectivity. Where an internet service is available, acquisition of knowledge does not pose any form of difficulty. Information and communication technologies offer unique and exciting opportunities for teaching and learning. Selinger (2000) observed that all forms of learning are enhanced by ICT (Information and Communication Technology), especially problem solving situations, which readily lend themselves to ICT, and students can learn to develop skill such as being systematic, logical and deductive through engaging themselves with carefully selected computer based tasks.

According to Onwuazo (2005) Internet is designed to allow an arbitrarily large number of networks to be interconnected and to be operated independently. These networks are connected by end switched circuits that remain in place until the communication has ended message switching. The package switching systems then sends units of information (packets, messages) that behave in many respects like electronic postcards. These postcards are originated from computer, addressing it to a destination computer in the network. According to Ogunsola, (2004) the use of internet has revolutionized access to information for the business world, libraries, education and individuals. A few of the most popular ones include e-mail, www (World Wide Web), FTP (File Transfer Protocol), Usenet and Telnet. He further stated that internet and its technology continues to have a profound effect in promoting the sharing of information especially in academic world.

It is generally believed that the new information and communication technologies can extend knowledge and education to the poor and marginalized people, and more so as the internet increasingly gains prominence as a tool to deliver better education out-comes more effectively. There is no doubt that the impact of ICT in the university educational sector has been particularly revolutionary and it has facilitated an efficient and effective learning and research environment. Apart from its use in supporting teaching, learning is required in the key administrative activities of planning, monitoring, control and management. Ibidapo (2003) observes that the university system at present is going through phenomenal growth and changes in students' enrolment, number of academic programmes, number of personnel with negative indices of cultism and activism among students and staff unions. He states further that these changes pose enormous challenges to the administration of the university system especially at a time when the much needed funding is diminishing.

A typical Nigerian university is beset often times with problems and tasks that can easily be solved with ICT tools, but fail in those tasks due to inability or determination to deploy. When properly utilized, ICT tools provide the best solutions in many areas of university administration at an enormously highly reduced personal cost. According to Onwuazo (2005) most of the libraries in Colleges of Education are still at the infancy stage of library automation or what may be regarded as planning stage, the situation is really very pathetic in that the level of computer application in Nigeria college libraries is not something to write home about. What it implies is that some libraries are on the planning stage while others are not even contemplating on it at all. Internet services cannot be fully operational in these Colleges of Education in Nigeria considering the above information.

Alabi (1993) notes that the failure of library automation in Nigerian higher

institutions of learning is that of personnel problem. The obvious contention by Alabi is that this problem has manifested the frequent breakdown of computer equipment in higher institutions and under utilization of the facilities. An academic institution cannot do without the internet in the era of the information superhighway. The academics and the students must study, research, publish, teach and communicate. With internet facilities, researchers and scientists will be able to collaborate on the same level with their colleagues in other parts of the world. according to Jagboro (2005) internet can be conceived as a rich, multi-layered, complex, ever-changing textual environment. The internet provides several opportunities for the academia. Based on the foregoing, the objectives of this study are: (a) to find out how accessible the internet facility in the college libraries is to the lecturers.(b) discover the pattern of use and what limitation, if they are using the facilities, and (c) to identify the reason for potential reluctance or dissatisfaction in using the internet

METHODOLOGY

The survey technique was adopted for this study since a large number of people are involved. The population for the study comprised all academic staff of the three Colleges of Education owned by Delta State Government during the 2009/ 2010 academic year. Information obtained from the colleges showed that the total population of the academic staff was 534. Of this number 20% of the staff population was selected as sample for the study. The sampling technique used was the proportion stratified sampling design. Therefore the sample was stratified into three groups. Each stratum was represented by COE Agbor lecturers, COE Warri lecturers and COE Mosogar lecturers.

The following processes were followed to obtain the stratification of the academic staff by colleges. Total number of academic staff is 534. Sample selected was106 representing 20% of the total academic staff in the collegeS. Out of 222 total number of lecturers in College of Education, Agbor only 44 lecturers representing 20% were sampled. Total number of lecturers in College of Education Warri is 220 20% of the lecturers were also selected for the study. In College of Education, Mosogar, the total number of lecturers is 92 but only 20% were selected as sample. The data for the survey was collected between November and December 2009 through the use of questionnaire which was sent to different schools in those institutions. Close ended questions provided answers that were easier to interpret and tabulate. The data collection took four weeks and a total of 106 copies of questionnaire were distributed. All questionnaires were duly filled and returned. The data collected were tabulated and analyzed through the use of simple percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Perform Search

Colleges	Never	Rarely	Sometime	Often	Always	Total
COE, Agbor	11.3	9.2	4.5	18.2	56.8	100
COE, Warri	4.5	6.8	15.9	22.7	50	100
COE, Mosogar	11.1	11.1	11.1	22.2	44.4.	100

Source: Survey 2009

Table 2 revealed that the most common way of locating information on the internet by the respondents is through the performance of searches.

Table 2: Educational Databases

Colleges	Never	Rarely	Sometime	Often	Always	Total
COE, Agbor	6.8	9.1	18.2	20.4	45.5	100
COE, Warri	4.5	4.5	11.3	27.8	52.3	100
COE, Mosogar	11.1	11.1	16.7	22.2	38.9	100

Source: Survey 2009

The above table revealed that the Educational database is one of the common ways of locating information on the internet by the respondents.

Table 3: The Use of Electronic Mail for Research

Colleges	Never	Rarely	Stime	Often	Always	Total
COE, Agbor Lecturer	1.8	2.8	3.8	4.7	28.3	41.4
COE, Warri Lecturer	0.9	1.8	1.8	3.8	30.0	33
COE, Mosogar Lecturer	-	-	-	21.8	15.1	16

Source: Survey 2009

From the table above, the survey showed that e-mail is the most commonly used tool in conducting research.

Table 4: The Use of www in Conducting Research

Colleges	Never	Rarely	Stime	Often	Always	Total
COE, Agbor Lecturer	4.5	4.5	9.1	11.4	72.5	
COE, Warri Lecturer	-	2.3	4.5	6.8	86.4	
COE, Mosogar Lecturer	-	-	-	4.5	88.9	

Source: Survey 2009

From the table, the survey showed that the World Wide Web is the most commonly used tool in conducting research.

Table 5: Access Points.

Colleges	**Access Points**	
	Respondent	**Percentage**
COE, Agbor Lecturers	44	41.5
COE, Warri Lecturer	44	41.5
COE, Mosogar Lecturer	18	17.0
Total	106	100

Source: Survey 2009

The study revealed that the respondents had a variety of access points to the internet. All the respondents accessed the internet at one time or the other. This study found that apart from the internet in their respective libraries, respondents have other points of access to the internet such as the cyber café.

Table 6: Experience of Internet Search.

Duration of Access	Respondent		Percentage
Less that 3 years	9/5/2	26	24.5
3 - 5 Years	30/26/15	71	67
6 - 10 Years	1/3/5	9	8.5
	106		100

Source: Survey 2009

As regards experience of internet search, the study revealed that the greater proportion of time the respondents have internet experience is between 3 - 5 years.

Table 7: Self rating of Level of Internet Skills

Self Rating	Respondent	Percentage
Very High	21	19.8
High	30	28.3
Average	50	47.8
Low	5	5
Total	106	100

Source: Survey 2009

Table 7 indicates that an approximated aggregate of 96% of the respondents rated their internet skill as very high, high and average. A few of them indicated that they need to improve their skills/knowledge on the internet.

Table 8: Obstacles to internet usage by Academic Staff

Description	Ignorance	AC	AD	Com. of use	Discomfort
Big Obstacle	8	23	14	7	1
Obstacle	4	27	22	11	5
Don't Know	3	7	9	6	6
An Obstacle	11	12	26	19	11
Not an Obstacle at all	60	22	20	44	65
Missing System	14	9	9	13	12
Total	100	100	100	100	00

Source: Survey 2009

As indicated on table 10, the greatest potential reluctance or dissatisfaction with using the internet is the cost and the difficulty of access. Concerning the cost of access the respondents indicated that it was a big obstacle, some indicated that it was just an obstacle while others indicated that it was quite an obstacle. Hence, the respondents indicated that the cost of accessing the internet is a barrier to usage. On the issue of the difficulty of access, similar response was gotten.

The next potential reluctance or barrier with using the internet had to do with its complication. A total of 37% of the respondents indicated that a potential reluctance or dissatisfaction in using the internet has to do with how complicate it was. It was also revealed that some of the respondents had no idea on how to access the internet. Hence a total of 23% of the respondents indicated that a potential reluctance in using the internet has to do with the fact that respondents have no idea about how to access it. The least potential reluctance with using internet had to do with the fact that the respondent felt uncomfortable sitting at a computer. The respondents indicated that this was not an obstacle.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The summary of the study findings are that: Academic staffs make use of internal resources like educational databases and search engines in locating information; internet resources like the electronic mail, the World Wide Web and professional article databases are used by the colleges lecturers in conducting research, teaching and business consultation; lecturers frequently use most of the internet resources more; the greatest barriers to using the internet are the cost of access and

difficulty of access. The internet has become a major development that allows access to information resources. Clearly the advantage of having access to this information resource irrespective of geographical location should come as a boost to researchers, educators and scientists especially those in developing countries.

The low budget for libraries of academic institutions in developing countries have led to long periods of lack of access to relevant up-to-date information, compared to their colleagues in developed countries who have ready access to current information. The study showed that in spite of these benefits that the internet offers, internet use is still low amongst the academic staff in Delta State Colleges of Education. There is need for establishment of the ICT department in the library and the employment of skilled manpower into the department. This will lead to easy connectivity and internet access at a very fast rate for every user. It is important therefore that Delta State Colleges of Education should create enabling environment for improvement of internet accessibility and sustainability and be part of the global information system.

The government must promote private sector investment through regulatory policies that effectively encourage technological innovations and promote long-term investment in telecommunication infrastructure which can result in the availability of cheaper and faster international data communication. Policy makers also should think of keeping pace with global changes with the aim of making internet use more affordable and more pervasive, through enactment of ICT friendly laws.

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