CHALLENGES OF STUDENTS' ONLINE REGISTRATION SYSTEM- A Case of Federal University of Technology, Minna

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ABSTRACT

The internet has finally found its way into the educational sector in a developing country like Nigeria. This is attested to the fact that most Nigerian institutions have now either completely or partially embraced the use student online registration system. This paper takes a look at the various challenges faced by students in carrying out this task. Questionnaires were distributed to students from various faculties to find out their level of satisfaction with the online registration interface and procedure as well the challenges being faced in the course of carrying out online registration. The results indicates that many of the students found it very interesting and easy to use but with attendants challenges of inadequate systems to use, slow speed of server, and lack of privacy of student data among others. The paper also suggests the way forward in order to make this laudable exercise a huge success in the nation tertiary institution.

INTRODUCTION

The role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in tertiary education is expanding and changing (Aitken, 2007). This is noted conspicuously with the introduction of online registration in institutions of higher learning across the nation. This idea and innovation was welcome with a lot enthusiasm. First it was seen as a form of relief for the hitherto redundant, costly, extortionary, and time wasting manual registration been practiced before (Adepoju & Alhassan ,2008). Second, it allows the institutions to join the global trend in Information Technology and thereby annex the opportunity it provides

Registration by students in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria used to be done manually until this decade which sees to the introduction of online registration. The manual method involves filling of different course forms, which are later submitted to the appropriate officers in charge who will eventually file them as appropriate.

This manual system has its inherent problems which include difficulty in locating registration officers at crucial times, time wastage, loss of forms, and mutilation of forms and so on.

The advent if ICT which is firmly gaining ground in our higher institution gave room way for the introduction of the university online registration system. The Federal University of Technology Minna which is used as the case study is among the first universities to commence the embrace the use of this technology in carrying out online registration.

This study therefore serves to critically assess and evaluate the extent to which this new system has been able to solve the myriad of problems in the manual era and at the same time to know the challenges and problems facing the current system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nowadays most organizations have their presence on the web. Among the teaming growth in websites is the institutional or educational websites which are being owned by schools or institutions. These types of website are very important considering the type of services they render viz; informing the populace about the school, online registration, giving guidelines to students seeking admission either for undergraduate or post graduate studies (academic or research), showing research areas for those interested in research, displaying admission list among others.(Adepoju & Osofisan, 2008)

Sadiq, Momodu & Aladejubelo(2008) affirm that a college portal offers variety of services that can be accessed by students, prospective students and the academic at large. They further stated that with the aid of college portal tasks such as student registration, course registration, as well students' application can be carried out on the internet. They are of the opinion that this approach is faster and more efficient than the orthodox way of carrying out the task prior to the advert of college portal.

Olorundare (2008), who is also of the same opinion buttress this fact by affirming that no doubt Information and Communication Technology has found its way in education. He

further stated that development in the education sector in developed and developing countries attest to the fact that ICT has become a central focus of many countries' educational policies and such, its use and integration has become widespread in the various school systems. Berkowitz (2002) reports that information and technology skills are the 'new basics' and being able to find and use information more effectively is essential to the success of students of all ages.

One way to make tasks easy to perform on the websites is to ensure that the site is easy to use, access and read. This could be easily done by taken into consideration various usability and accessibility guidelines advocated by usability experts across the globe.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the challenges of online registration system.

2. To know whether the procedure used for online registration system easily usable and accessible.

3. To assess and evaluate the website used for online registration

4. To identify the problems militating against the use of online registration system

METHODOLOGY

The students of FUT Minna form the population of the study. They are drawn the four schools in the university namely School of Science and Science Education (SSSE), School of Engineering and Engineering Technology (SEET), School of Environmental Technology (SET) and School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology (SAAT). A total of 100 questionnaires were carefully and properly distributed to the students with all the 100 returned which is 100% of the distributed items (Response rate). Equal numbers of students were selected from each school. They were purposefully selected to ensure that students who participate and do online registration on their own are used for the study.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections with section one focusing on users' satisfaction with the online registration procedure. Section two ask the users to identify the various problem encountered in the course of doing online registration. Through this

qualitative data were gathered and the results of the analyses were collected and analyzed by using descriptive statistics.

Table 1: Sex of The Participants

Sex	Frequency
MALE	57
FEMALE	43
Total	100

Table shows that 5 7% of the participants are Males while 43% are Females.

Table 2: Is Online Registration Stress Free?

Option	Frequency
YES	90
NO	10
Total	100

From Table 2, 90% of the participants were of the view that the procedure of online registration is not stressful while only 10% disagree with that view.

. **Table 3: Stress Free According to Sex**

SEX	stress free	
	YES	NO
Male	50	7
Female	40	3
Total	90	10

This is further analysed in Table 3 according to sex, here 50 Males and 40 Females agreed that it is stress free irrespective of the faculty. Only 7 Makes and 3 females disagreed that it is not stress free

From Table 4, 38% of the participants strongly agreed that the log on procedure to commence online registration is very easy to use, 54% agreed, 4% strongly disagree while 4% disagree with this view.

Table 3: Log on Procedure based in School

| SCHOOL | log on procedure is easy | | | | Total |
	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREED	
SSSE	0	1	12	12	25
SET	1	2	14	8	25
SEET	1	0	14	10	25
SAAT	2	1	14	8	25
Total	4	4	54	38	100

From Table 3, 12% of the participants from SSSE and 14% each from SET, SEET and SAAT respectively agreed that the log on procedure is easy while 12% from SSSE, 10% from SEET and 8% each from SET and SAAT respectively strongly agreed. 1 participant each SET and SEET, 2 from SAAT and none from SSSE disagree . Also 1 participant each from SSSE and SAAT, 2 from SET and none from SEET strongly disagree with the view. This shows that 92% find the log in procedure easy to use.

Table 4: Ease of Use Website

| SCHOOL | Ease of Use | | | | Total |
	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	
SSSE	4	2	10	9	25
SET	6	4	11	4	25
SEET	2	4	13	6	25
SAAT	5	2	12	6	25
Total	17	12	46	25	100

Table 4 shows that 4 participants from SSSE, 6 from SET, 2 from SEET and 5 from SAAT disagree that the web site is easy to use. 2 participants from SSSE, 2 from SAAT and 4 each from SET and SEET respectively strongly disagree. Also 10 participants from SSSE, 11 from Set, 13 from SEET and 12 from SAAT agree while 9 participants from SSSE, 4 from

SET and 6 each from SEET and SAAT strongly agreed. This indicates that majority of the audience (71%) find the websites easy to use.

Table 5: Ease of Reading of Website

SCHOOL	Ease of Reading			Total
	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	
SSSE	2	8	15	25
SET	1	14	10	25
SEET	1	14	10	25
SAAT	1	16	8	25
Total	5	52	43	100

Table 5 shows that 2 of the participant from SSSE, and 1 each from the remaining three schools disagree that the website is easy to read. 8 of the participant from SSSE, 16 from SAAT and 14 each from SET and SEET agree. 15 participants from SSSE, 8 from SAAT and 10 each from SET and SEET strongly agree. This shows that 95% of the respondent representing 54% males and 41% females find the websites easy to read.

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ONLINE REGISTRATION

The students were required to indicate the nature of problems they encountered in the process of doing online registration. This is in view of the fact that the problems encountered by students may vary from student to student. In all a total 11 problems were identified by the students in relation to online registration system.

From Table 7 below, 26.5% of the students experience slow download of the website in the process of doing online registration. Closely follow this is down time by the server (20.14%). 6.4% of the respondents experienced wrong allocation of units to courses, 16.96% experienced delay in acceptance of financial details by the system, and 2.12% experienced delay from the banks in sending the financial details to school.

Furthermore 1.1% of the respondents said they encountered problems from power failure. Unexpectedly this percentage is low but this is so because most café has made provision for stand by generators.

S/N	NATURE OF PROBLEMS	FREQUENCY	%
1	Wrong credits assign to courses	6	6.4
2	Lack of frequent update of files	6	6.4
3	Financial details (Acceptance of School fees)	16	16.9
4	Insufficient/inadequate system	16	16.9
5	Invalid matric number/Missing names	15	15.9
6	Slow download time of the websites	25	26.5
7	Server is down/ slow system/service	19	20.1
8	Delay from bank	2	2.1
9	Lack of security of student data	2	2.1
10	Inaccessibility of the site	2	2.1
11	Electricity	1	1.1

There is also complaint about security of student data which is represented by 2.1%. 15.5% of the participant also experienced invalid matriculation number which was wrongly uploaded to the net. More so, 16.9% complained of inadequate system for use while another 6.4% complained of lack of frequent update of files.

DISCUSSION

From the study it was discovered that the numbers of systems available to use by students either within the campus or even in the cybercafé are not adequate. This often leads to congestion, long and unnecessary queue, and wasting of time. All these will eventually lead to the delay in the completion of the registration process. A similar study conducted by

Chinwe (2006) indicated that unavailability of internet facilities is an impediment to its use. If the systems (facilities) are not readily available, certainly the process of registration will be further delay. She further identified power failure, poor environment, and slow speed of server, system breakdown, and insufficient workstation as some of the problems affecting internet access in institution of higher learning.

From the study lack of frequent updates of the websites is another major problem. Because of incidences of wrong data entry and wrong allocation of credits to courses, it is expected that the website should be updated from time to time once the complaints are made known to the authority. However this is not often the case as the students keep on making the same complaints over and over.

At times delay response from some banks in sending financial details of students for uploading to the server is another problem encountered by some students.

The slow speed of the server which is as a result of either low bandwidth used by the cybercafé operator or the school is another major challenge. When there is traffic congestion accessibility to the site is at a snail speed. This tends to hamper the registration procedure.

Commenting on the operation of existing and associated problem in relation to college portal, Sadiq, Momodu & Aladejubelo (2008) describe the epileptic nature of the electricity power supply in the country as a major constraint in the usage of internet application which online registration depends on mainly. Further more students majorly access the portals by visiting public internet centers popularly known as cybercafé. This may involve transportation from one place to another on the part of the students which is usually not convenient.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results from this study clearly indicate that many problems are still militating against the students' online registration system. An exercise that is supposed to be simple, easy and stress free is nothing but rather tedious, time consuming and cumbersome despite the widely

acclaimed technological innovation and advancement. Introduction of technology or more precisely an automated system should be devoid of most problems identified in this study.

Therefore in order to make this system usable, accessible and interesting, I wish to make the following recommendations. There should be adequate provision of enough systems for use for online registration. No doubt the population of the students is increasing session by session, so it is expected that there should be corresponding increase in the number of access points for students to do online registration. This will not only avoid congestion on the few available systems but it will also hasten the registration process.

A very good alternative is that the management should make concerted effort to partner with private or public organization so as to make laptop available for students at a very affordable price. This will allow students to do online registration on their own at any convenient time 24/7 using wireless network at any convenient location

There should also be increase in the bandwidth used for internet access. The current 11 mbps being used mostly is relatively small and inadequate for the student population. Increase in the bandwidth will definitely lead to fast access and speedy completion of registration process. A bandwidth of 100mbps or more is recommended.

More practical training should be organized for students on internet usage as this will aid them in carrying out the online registration. As it is today many students still engage the services of other students or cybercafé operator to do online registration for them. This is not good enough for our university system in a developing nation like this.

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