STUDENT'S PERSONAL SKILLS REQUIRED FOR VIRTUAL LEARNING IN NIGER STATE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The study focused on student's personal skills required for virtual learning in Niger State Tertiary Institution, personal skills are essential to enable students succeeds in virtual learning. Three research questions guided the study and a total number of 54 copies of structured questionnaire with five point likert scale were distributed and used to elicit information from the respondents and all the copies were retrieved given a return rate of 100%. Mean and standard deviation were employed to answer the research questions. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study; it was found that technical literacy skills, self-motivational skills and personal commitment skills were needed for virtual learning. It was also recommended that students should endeavor to attend training programme organized by the college, private agencies and government agencies to increase their level of personal skills to enable them become proficient users of technological system at their disposal.

Introduction

In the present days Nigeria, there is a general demand for functional education, the important role of technology to the present and future human existence cannot be over emphasized, the socio-economic and technological development of any community or nation hinge on the level of qualitative educational attainment of the citizens, Niger State as a developing state can only achieve this by exposing her students at the tertiary institutions to Virtual learning, the success of this instructional technique depends on the students personal skills. These skills are so essential for every 21st century child as a knowledge explorer. Okorie, (2001) defined skills as ease, rapidity and precision usually of muscular action, Garrison (1997) also sees skills as the ability to do something well arising from talents, training or practice. Skills are of different types, they include academic skills, occupational/technical skills and employability skills. An efficient skill developed raises hope for better utilization of resources for the nation's industrial growth and development.

Personal skills are those skills that an individual should posses to enable him/her succeed in a Virtual learning environment; these skills are the Technical literacy skills, self-motivational skills, effective personal written communication skills, independent learning skills and personal commitment skills, Crowley, (2002). Personal skills are so essential to students in tertiary institutions to mitigate the impact of the current population explosion and poverty, which has amounted to massive unemployment in many developing countries; these can be reduced by providing environment from which to engage student proactively in finding solutions to the problems and challenges they learn about in the classrooms.

Virtual learning holds great potential in supporting and augmenting existing educational as well as National development efforts. Virtual learning instructional technique is still face with several problems, if these problems are not addressed the effectiveness of any Virtual learning programme will be reduced considerably and will not be adequately replicated both at the state and national levels. Virtual learning has a key role to play as an enabler to help better manage complex information flow and to integrate them towards the maximization of

human capacity and potentials. Virtual learning is the delivery of educational lessons through electronic medium anytime, anywhere. It can also be defined as employing information and communication technology to deliver instruction. Virtual learning is a term frequently used interchangeably with Distance learning, Online learning, e-learning or web-based learning (Holstron, 2002). Virtual learning is seen as one of the modern instructional techniques that adopt the principle of artificial intelligence, that combine the power of massive data processing and computational power associated with modern computers Webstar & Hackley. (1997).

In educational delivery system, Virtual learning can be achieved through the Internet, CD ROMs and computer base programme instruction either in the form of asynchronous instructor led instruction, synchronous instruction and blended instruction to compliment in-person teacher's instruction Frick (1991). Virtual learning is being developed to address individual learning styles and need, to provide opportunities for students at risk for dropping out because of pregnancy, high mobility, disciplinary problems, to offer wider course offerings, particularly advanced courses and to accommodate the needs of accelerated learners. The National policy on Education National Policy on Education (NPE 2004) defined tertiary education as the education given after secondary education, in the Universities, Colleges Of Education, Polytechnics, Monotechnics, including those institutions offering correspondence course. The main goal of tertiary education is to acquire social and intellectual skills which will enable an individual to be self-reliant and useful member of the society.

Statement of the Problem

Many exciting applications of information technology in schools validate that new technology based models of teaching and learning have the power to dramatically improve educational outcomes. Yet the cost of technology, the rapid evolutions and the special knowledge, skills and aptitude required of its users pose substantial barriers to effective utilization Dede, (1998). The students in Niger State tertiary institutions cannot adequately explore for knowledge over the Internet using the computers, since information are received in lecture format over the Internet. This is because inadequate training programmes and infrastructures are put in place by government in the educational sector for students to acquire personal skills before the introduction of Virtual learning facilities in Niger State tertiary institutions. Therefore the personal skills possessed by the students are grossly inadequate consequently making the students to be unskilled, ineffective and unproductive. Therefore the problem of this study is that students in Niger State tertiary institutions do not possess the personal skills and aptitude required for them to succeed in a Virtual learning environment.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions

4. What are the personal technical literacy skills required by students in Niger State tertiary institutions for Virtual learning?
5. What are the effective personal communication skills required by students in Niger State tertiary institutions for Virtual learning?
6. What are the independent learning skills required by students in Niger State College of Education for Virtual learning?

Methodology

Area of the Study: The area of the study is Niger State College of Education, Minna. This area suits this study because it is believed that the acquisition of social and intellectual skills

which will enable an individual to be self reliant and useful member of the society is best achieved at the tertiary institutions.

Population: The population for the study comprises all the students of School of Technical Education, Niger State College of Education.

Sample: A total number of 54 students were randomly selected from all the levels of the students of School of Technical Education

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument used for the study is the questionnaire designed to elicit information that relates to the three research questions of the study.

Method of Data Analysis: The data collected with the questionnaire were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer each of the three research questions in taking decision for the study.

Research Question 1
What is the personal technical literacy skill required by students in Niger State tertiary Institutions for virtual learning?

Table 1
Mean responses of students on personal technical literacy skills required for virtual learning in Niger State tertiary institutions.

S/No	Technical Literacy skills required	VHR	HR	AR	LR	NR	N	X	SD	Remark
1	Ability to start, reboot and shut down a computer	20	14	11	6	3	54	3.76	1.22	Required
2	Ability to Log on to the Internet	17	15	12	6	4	54	3.60	1.23	Required
3	Ability to print a word processing document	17	14	12	6	5	54	3.58	1.39	Required
4	Ability to add a table to a document and edits rows and columns	18	13	10	8	5	54	3.55	1.33	Required
5	Ability to add a table to a document and edits rows and columns	17	14	12	8	3	54	3.67	1.23	Required
6	Ability to understand animation of movement	17	15	11	7	4	54	3.64	1.26	Required
7	Ability to vary font, size and style	16	14	10	8	6	54	3.53	1.33	Required

Research Question 2
What is the personal effective communication skill required by students in Niger State tertiary institutions for virtual learning?

Table 2
Mean responses of student's effective communication skills required for virtual learning in Niger State tertiary institutions.

S/No	Effective Communication skills	VHR	HR	AR	LR	NR	N	X	SD	Remark
8	Ability to use the computer to spell and grammar check to revise your work	16	13	11	8	6	54	3.5	1.36	Required
9	Ability to create, send, forward reply and save e-mail messages	15	14	12	9	4	54	3.55	1.23	Required
10	Ability to use talk or chat features for real-time communication	15	13	11	9	6	54	3.41	1.34	Fairly required
11	Ability to read and understand text messages clearly	21	13	12	6	2	54	3.5	0.85	Requires
12	Ability to use electronic mailing lists for communication	15	13	12	8	6	54	3.5	1.33	Required
13	Ability to understand the purpose of a Browser	20	15	10	7	2	54	3.79	1.2	Required
14	Ability to use keyboard in a simple search	17	15	12	6	4	54	3.66	1.27	Required

Research Question 3
What are the independent learning skills required by students in Niger State tertiary institutions for virtual learning?

Table 3
Mean responses of students independent learning skills required for virtual learning in Niger State tertiary institutions.

S/no	Independent learners skills required	VHR	HR	AR	LR	NR	N	X	SD	Remark
15	Ability to always work within schedule time when learning	18	12	10	8	4	54	3.52	1.33	Required
16	Ability to set and realize goals and objectives when learning	18	15	10	7	4	54	3.61	1.44	Required
17	Ability to work in collaboration with other students virtually through e-mail correspondence	19	14	11	7	3	54	3.47	1.36	Required
18	Ability to look forward to growing and developing	20	14	12	5	3	54	3.78	1.25	Required

	one's full potentials when learning									
`19	Ability to transfer knowledge from virtual learning situation to real life situations	20	15	9	6	4	54	3.72	1.27	Required
20	Ability to access the information needed for problem solving virtually	19	13	12	7	3	54	3.68	1.24	Required
21	Ability to use self management strategies such as self discipline to allocate time and resources	17	14	12	6	5	54	3.57	1.09	Required

Discussion

Research Question I was designed to find out the personal technical literacy skills required by students in Niger State tertiary institutions to enable them to succeed in virtual learning. Results of the study revealed that the ability to start, reboot and shut down a computer, ability to Log on to the Internet, ability to print a word processing document, ability to add a table to a document and edits rows and columns, ability to understand animation of movement and the ability to vary font, size and style are all in agreement with Owen (2003) and Osinem & Nwoji (2005) that technological literacy is knowledge about what technology is, how it works, what purpose it can serve and how it can be used efficiently and effectively to achieve specific goals.

Research Question II was designed to find out the effective communication skills required by students in Niger State tertiary institutions to enable them succeed in virtual learning. Result of the study revealed that the ability to use the computer to spell and grammar check to revise your work, ability to create, send, forward reply and save e-mail messages, ability to use talk or chat features for real-time communication, ability to read and understand text messages clearly, ability to use electronic mailing lists for communication, ability to understand the purpose of a browser and ability to use keyboard in a simple search are all in line with Rushkoff (1999), that in today's wired networked society it is imperative that students learn to communicate effectively using a range of media, technology and environment. This include both synchronous and asynchronous communications, such as person to person to e-mail correspondence, phone or audio communication and interactions through simulations and models, several of these acquired knowledge of etiquette are unique to their independent learning skills.

Research Question III was designed to find out the independent learning skills required by students in Niger State tertiary institutions to enable them succeed in virtual learning. Result of the study revealed that the ability to always work within schedule time when learning, ability to set and realize goals and objectives when learning, ability to work in collaboration with other students virtually through e-mail correspondence, ability to look forward to growing and developing one's full potentials when learning, ability to transfer knowledge from virtual learning situation to real life situations, ability to access the information needed for problem solving virtually and the ability to use self management strategies such as self discipline to allocate time and resources are all in line with HonKock and Betts (2002), that independent learners are responsible owners and managers of their own learning process,

such individuals have the skills to access and process the information they need for a specific purpose independent learning integrates self management (management of the context including social setting, resources and actions) with self monitoring (the process whereby learners monitor, evaluates and regulate their cognitive learning strategies).

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn: students in Niger State tertiary institutions require personal technical literacy skills in order to become proficient user of the technological systems at their disposals to enable them cope with this modern instructional techniques. The willingness to make mistakes, advocate unconventional or unpopular positions, tackle extremely challenging problems without obvious embraced by all students to make a head way in virtual learning.

Recommendations

The following are recommended:

4. Formulation of policies to encourage the development of personal skills in tertiary institutions. This will change our society from depending to self – reliance.
5. Establishment of training centers for students in tertiary institutions to acquire personal skills. This will make the students to perfect their personal skills and become proficient users of technological systems.
6. Students should endeavour to attend training programme organized by government agencies and other private organizations. This will increase their level of personal skills making them to be multi-skilled, effective, proficient and productive enhancing their employability in the labour market.

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