

Electronic learning as a new method of studying history in Nigeria Universities as Perceived by Lecturers and Students

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Conceptual framework and background

The world is presently tending towards being a global village in this era of digitalization and many nations are bracing up to mark their position in the global square. Globalization refers to a growing tendency of worldwide association and interdependence of countries and their people leading to a type of social network and linkages. This has been made possible by the use of ICT especially in the education sector. The nation of Nigeria is not left out in the globalization process as preparations have been made in various sectors of the economy to apply ICT principles. The education sector is gradually being reformed in order to fit into the global trend.

With the growing trend of ICT being a tool for educational reform, the Nigeria governments formulated and launch an ICT policy in 1986. The policy was titled "the national policy on computer literacy and education" with the major aim of equipping Nigerians at various levels of education with the preliminary ICT tools. According to UNESCO (2003), teachers and teacher educators are of central importance in tapping the potentials offered by ICT, to enhance the quality of education. This has led to the examination of the acceptance by lecturers and students, of a special aspect of ICT applicable to teaching and learning called electronic learning as a variable tool to reposition the study of history in Nigeria universities to sustain interest in the subject in this era of digitalization.

Electronic learning (e-learning) connotes learning/knowledge derives from using computer-aided-gadgets (Noah, 2006) e-learning is a subject of information and communication technology (ICT), encompassing the application of information technologies and communicating same through electronic devices. E-learning is a tool for improving teaching and learning, remedial tool learners with learning difficulties. It is also a good access route to teaching, learning and research materials (Naidoo, 2005),. Emphasizing more on the benefits

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of e-learning, Naidoo explains that it makes delivery of instructions very flexible and interactive and learning long lasting.

According to history of Nigeria: the federal republic of Nigeria covers an area of 570,000 square km, and according to the 2006 census has a population of 140,000,000 people, an increase over 20,000,000 people over the 1991 census. The coastline stretches for 800km from Badegry in the west to Calabar in the East, and includes the bight of Benin and Bony its boarders are contiguous with the republic of Benin (Dahomey) to the west, Niger republic to the north and republic of Cameroon to the east. Nigeria is now divided into thirty six states (36)

The world is trending toward becoming a global village through the world wide web (www) and history, as the study of past and present events has to be properly position in this village though e-learning. Vastness of history content had been a source of fear to students, and of serious concern for history teachers (lecturers) introduction of e-learning as a new approach to the teaching and learning of history in our universities will likely reduce the vastness to mere interaction and discussion classes from all sides of the globe. Hence, this study is intended to makes a case for the exploration of this tool, as an innovative approach to the teaching and learning of history

Statement of the problem

The teaching and learning of history in our universities for sometimes now have been facing serious challenges. This is as a result of a fragmental approach to its study due to its vastness. This has resulted to history students struggling to fix these fragmented pieces in order to view the whole nature of history. At a stage where they cannot cope with this vast nature, it results in their withdrawal from the history class by dropping it, giving rise to low enrolments in the subject. As explained eelior, attention is being shifted globally to the new trend of information and communication technology (ICT) as a new tool for diverse technological and educational applications. The problem posed by this study therefore is: how as history lectures and students perceived e-learning as a new method of teaching and learning of history in universities in the north-central states of Nigeria?

RESEARCH

Research design:

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study as the study sought the opinion of the respondents on the perceptions of e-learning as a new approach to the teaching and learning of history

Results

E-learning as a new approach to teaching and learning of history is a welcome development as there has been this continues effort by various authorities concerned, on how best to reduce its vastness. This is to make it attractive and manageable on both teachers and students. Both the lecturers and students perceived that the teaching and learning of history would be made a lot easier, as source of knowledge will be change from single to multiple. This in line with the positions of Eya (2009) and Adimabua, Obukohwo and Okechuku (2009), when they started this e-learning materials are arranged in a simplified format to make them interesting and exciting for both teachers and students. Furthermore, Adimabua etal (2009) notice that educational processes are restructured as source of knowledge is changed from simple to multiple

With e-learning, the world will be brought to a digital square, whereby clearer appreciation of one's own environment. The various historical phenomena are brought within historical space, thus making their learning stress free and manageable

E-learning according to the perception of the respondents will make for an easy way of, and creative teaching and learning of some history concepts that have been difficult to handle on the traditional classroom. This is possible reiterates Mitchell (2008) because e-learning provide diverse hypermedia and multimedia kits that help students to developed deep critical thinking, as they study and analyze phenomena.

Once there is unit of purpose, learning circle thrives, and this enhances teaching and learning. Relevant educational materials are posted online by the collaborating institutions, and the learners and teachers now log online in order to join the lesson. The students and their teachers through the internet, gain access to the world of academic concepts, principles and theories posted online. Thus, they have access to vast amount of information and resource that cannot be attained in a single instructional settings Villanuel(2000).

Conclusion

History is worthwhile for the development of any society. It's worth stems from its focus on the development of an individual, who will in turn, develop the entire society. The vastness

of the subject has led to withdrawals from the class by students and this has been a source of concern to history authorities in the nation. Consequently, the examination of e-learning as a new approach to its study tend to bring a welcome development to all concerned. This is as a result of e-learning bringing the world into a global space which makes it easy to organize and study phenomenon the earth surface. Its hypamedia resources make it interesting and easy to study history phenomena from any part of the globe.

Hence, there was this high perception by the respondents that e-learning is a new approach to its study, which now rhymes with the nation's yearning for the digitalization of its classrooms and the other aspect of the economy. The respondents can be seen items 1-26 of table I believe that e-learning have reposition history for the better and attract students back to its study.

Recommendations

Base on the finding of the study and its implications drowned, the following recommendations are made:

- The federal government should set the pace in the digitalization of the Nigerian classrooms by setting up a committee for the implementation of e-learning in all level of the nation's educational system
- E-learning is cost intensive because of the sophisticated equipment involved. As such, the various level of government should put in place machineries for collaboration with indigenous/foreign firms and donor agencies to make it
- Various higher institutions and professional organizations should arrange how to organize conferences/workshops on mode of operation of e-learning and procedures for collaborations in various areas
- The case of Refusniks" has to be properly handled. Refusniks are individuals who dislike the use of electronic approach to do things rather; they prefer their traditional method than accept new ones. This group of individual I the education system need to be enlightened to brace up with the new trend of digitalization, so that they won't be left behind in the scheme of things.

Suggestion for further research

Other topics within history and other subjects may be treated using these strategies.

E-learning is power driving, so stable power supply is needed always

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Adamu Zubairu Evuti is a PhD holder in educational technology at federal university of technology Minna Niger state, Nigeria. He has published many articles in both local and international conferences and international journals