

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USE OF MOODLE E-LEARNING PLATFORM FOR TEACHING IN FACULTY OF EDUCATION, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA.

By

MOHAMMED Rukkayya Yunusa & OPEYEMI Romoke Quadri Ph.D

Abstract

This study explored factors that influence the use of Moodle E-learning platform for teaching in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Qualitative case study research design was adopted for the study and purposive criterion-based sampling technique was used to sample ten participants from the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Data was analysed using qualitative content Analysis. The study found that the factors that influence the use of Moodle e-learning platform by Lecturers in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria include lack of technical support and lack of awareness. The study recommended that the Management of the faculty should request for two technical support staffs from the Institute of Computing and Information and communication technology (ICICT) to be stationed in the faculty digital centre to cater for technical problems that lecturers might encounter in the use of Moodle e-learning platform and to train lecturers periodically.

Introduction

The exponential increase in enrolment of students into Nigeria Universities is a major source of stress for Nigerian University lecturers that eventually leads to their death (Ubangari & Bako, 2014; Usoro & Etuk, 2016). These lecturers are expected to lecture students that are over 700 per course (Satope, 2014) with facilities that are overstretched (Okebukola, 2008). They also mark the scripts of these students and are also required to publish research articles. In addition, most of these lecturers have visiting and sabbatical responsibilities to make ends meet. All these activities put together constitute a source of academic stress that has serious physical and physiological consequences that leads to death.

To reduce this workload and the resultant stress, studies (Maqableh, Rajab, Quteshat, Khatib, & Karajeh, 2015) have recommended the use of e-learning. E-learning is learner centred, web-based delivery of educational instruction and instructional materials. It offers remote access to these instruction and instructional materials from wherever the learner is geographically situated, which reduces over crowdedness of classrooms and the need for learners to even be in the classrooms. E-learning also offers the lecturer that opportunity to pre-record his classes and send online. It also offers the lecturer the remote provision of instructions and instructional materials. The lecturer does not necessarily have to be in the class.

Tertiary institutions around the world have adopted the use of Learning management systems to enable teaching and learning to become effective (Suppasetserree & Dennis, 2010). The use of these systems coupled with their synchronization with the Internet has provided alternative options to face-to-face mode of education. It has enabled faculty members to provide students with different materials and to interact with them in real time even when they are not located in the same physical space (Saleem, Al-Saqri & Ahmad, 2016). They have also reduced the workload on

lecturers by reducing the amount of work put into developing course materials, going physically to class to deliver lectures, evaluating the work of thousands of students and locating information resources for the students. An example of these learning management system is the Modular Object-oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (Moodle).

Despite the affordances of e-learning, there is low use of this technology by lecturers (Dalton & Gren, 2015) in many developing countries. Studies on the adoption and use of technology have stressed the importance of perception in the adoption and use of technology (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000; Nagunwa & Lwoga 2012). Similarly, specific studies on e-learning adoption (Bukhari, 2011; Njenga, 2011; Eze et al, 2018; Adeoye et al., 2020) have shown that there are individual/personal factors that influence e-learning adoption by lecturers. Therefore, in order to increase the use of e-learning technology, there is the need to explore factors that influence the use of e-learning from the perspective of the lecturers.

Statement of the problem

Moodle is a free open source course management system (CMS), that provides instructors with useful features such as the ability to embed resources, activities that are centred on a topic of study and a variety of modes of operation (Baytiyeh, 2013). The main advantage of integrating and using Moodle is the fact that it is free to download, install and customize (Branzburg, 2005). It helps the lecturer manage the courses, topics in the courses and all aspects of evaluation of students registered for a course. Moodle is flexible in the sense that it offers the option of managing learning activities on daily, weekly, fortnightly or even on a monthly basis. This invariably reduces the workload on the instructor that has thousands of students like is the case in many Nigerian Universities.

Despite the advantages that accrue from using Moodle in terms of reducing the workload of lecturers in Nigerian universities and the fact that Moodle is open source, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria lecturers still face the battle of overcrowded classrooms and workload that is very high.

Surprisingly, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria adopted the Moodle e-Learning Platform available for Lecturers in 2014. Despite the fact that Moodle has benefitted many Universities in the Developed world, the use of this platform by lecturers in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (A.B.U, Zaria) leaves much to be desired. A cursory look at the Ahmadu Bello University Moodle e-learning platform shows that out of over the 3000 lecturers that are presently in the university, only 115 (less than 4%) use the Moodle e-learning platform, (ICICT, 2018). There is therefore the need to explore factors that influence the use of this platform by faculty members in the university. The Faculty of Education is the focus of this study because it has more than 40% of the students' population of the university. It has a student strength of more than 21,000 (Twenty-one thousand), (MIS Unit, 2019).

This study therefore explored factors influencing the use of Moodle platform by faculty members in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Objective of the study

The objective of this paper is to determine factors influencing the use of Moodle platform by faculty members in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Literature Review

The advantages of the use of e-learning platforms in higher education have been well documented all over the world. While these success stories have depicted the critical need for the adoption and use of these e-learning technologies as the solution to myriad problems associated with the face-to-face mode of education, many universities in sub Saharan Africa have been slow in the adoption of these technologies.

Kunda, Chembe and Mukupa (2018) in their study that investigated the factors that influence Zambian Higher Education Lecturers' attitude towards integrating ICTs in Research and Teaching documented issues related to lack of adequate bandwidth, software and hardware infrastructure, lack of technical and administrative support, and lack of knowledge to integrate ICT infrastructure into teaching. Goktas, Gedik, and Baydas (2013) on the other hand, grouped these factors into internal and external factors. The internal factors encompass belief and attitude towards the use of these technologies while the external factors have to do with the infrastructure and lack of technical support. Generally, literature on challenges to the use of e-learning platforms have noted technological challenges, individual challenges, cultural challenges and course challenges. These challenges however have a bearing with the countries involved. In most developing countries, individual and technological challenges are mostly more pronounced. Lack of knowledge and poor infrastructure are the main challenges (Aung & Khang, 2015). Al-Araibi, Naz'ri bin Mahrin and Yusoff (2019) however, opined that 45% of e-learning projects in developing countries fail as a result of technological issues relating to infrastructure and technical support. Munezero, Irura, Kirongo, Etiegni, & Suhonen (2016) also identified six broad categories of factors that influence the use of e-learning technology from the lecturers' perspective to include; lack of infrastructure, insufficient training, poor Internet access, lack of technically adept users as well as lack of university support, privacy/security concerns, and lastly, motivation, and other contextual factors.

Chewe and Chitumbo (2012) study set out to understand the potentials and challenges of adopting Moodle e-learning software at the University of Zambia (UNZA). Specific objectives were to establish awareness and usage levels of Moodle, potential benefits and challenges and possible adoption strategies. Results indicated that majority of UNZA community were not aware of Moodle's existence and thus did not use it. It was however, established that despite people not knowing of Moodle's existence, a larger population was willing to support its adoption. This study will bridge the gap of factors that are endemic to the Northern Nigerian context and the situation in Ahmadu Bell University, Zaria that have deployed Moodle and have not being using it.

Cheok, Wong, Ayub and Mahmud (2017) in their study of Malaysian teachers examined the perception of teachers on the benefits and challenges in the adoption of FROG Virtual Learning environment. The study adopted qualitative methodology and found the workload on teachers prevented them from exploring and mastering the system. The teachers also identified lack of ICT skills coupled with the lack of technical support as the major barriers to the adoption of the system in the three secondary schools that were used in the study.

Similarly, the study by Eze, Chinedu-Eze and Bello (2018) examined adoption and utilization of e-learning facilities by lecturers in Nigerian private tertiary institution. The study adopted qualitative approach to investigate the adoption and utilization of e-learning facilities by

lecturers in a Nigerian private tertiary institution using 15 semi-structured interviews from the academic staff of M-University. The study found that Attitude of users, inadequate internet facility, inadequate training of users affects the successful adoption.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative case study design. Data was collected using Semi structured interview. The case for this study is the faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The data source was selected based on the following criteria:

- i. The Faculty member must be lecturer 1 and above.
- ii. The Faculty member should be aware but not using the MOODLE platform.

The Purposive criterion-based sampling technique was used based on the criteria specified above. Saturation point was reached after the seventh interview where no new information was gotten from the Interviewees. Data collected from the interviews were transcribed and analysed using content analysis.

Result/Discussion

This study sought to determine factors that influence the use of moodle e-learning platform by the lecturers of Faculty of Education A.B.U. Zaria. Two categories emerged from the narratives of the participant of this study. These are; (1) Lack of Technical support (2) Lack of Awareness.

Table 4.4 Factors that affect the use of Moodle e-learning platform by the lecturers of faculty of education

RQ3	Categories	Sub-categories	Freq	Perc	
1. What factors affect the use of Moodle elearning platform by Lecturers in Faculty of Education, ABU, Zaria?	1. Lack of Technical Support	1.1 Accessing the platform is difficult	1	11.11	
		1.2 Implementing the platform without continuity	1	11.11	
		1.3 The Problem accessibility	2	22.22	
		1.4 The stress of going to Iya Abubakar times without number without solving my problem	1	11.11	
		1.5 Problem of training and re-training	6	66.66	
	Group total		2	22.22	
	2. Lack of Awareness	2.1 Lack of Awareness	2	22.22	
		Group total		8	88.88
	GRAND TOTAL				

Source: Interview Analysis, 2020

This study found two factors that influence the use of Moodle e-learning platform by lecturers of Faculty of Education, A. B. U. Zaria to include: Lack of Technical Support and lack of awareness. In this study setting, lecturers remarked that lack of technical support and lack of

awareness of the platform were factors that affect their use of Moodle e-learning platform. They lamented on issues of difficulty in accessing the platform. *Participant 1 remarked that “accessing the platform became so difficult....” Similarly, Participant 4 express that “the problem I get all the time is accessibility...”* The participants also bemoaned the issue of continuity in the use of the platform. Participant 3 commented that *“there is the problem of implementing something that is starting something just like that without continuity like this Moodle now it has already been abandoned...”* The participants also complained of having to go to Iya Abubakar centre over and over again to fix problems. Participant 2 expressed that *“I can’t endure the stress of going to Iya Abubakar times without number without solving my problem....”*

Furthermore, the participants in this study setting expressed the lack of awareness of the platform. Participant 3 explained that *“the project is there without people not fully aware.....”* while Participant 5 noted that *“the reason I don’t use moodle is it not properly advertise some lecturers are not aware....”* Also Participant 6 mentioned that *“there is no awareness of the platform as far as I am concern.....”*

This finding is not surprising as studies have opined that lack of technical support is a major factor in the use of technology (Turel & Johnson, 2012; Jamieson-Proctor, Albion, Finger, Cavanagh, Fitzgerald, Bond, & Grimbeek, 2013; Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015). Similarly, this finding is not new in information science literature. Rogers (2004) opined that innovations diffuse or not if the individual adopter perceives the innovation as being complex or difficult to understand or use.

Similarly, lecturers in this study setting lamented a lack of awareness of the technology. This affects their use of Moodle e-learning platform. According to Epper and Bates (2001), the degree to which faculty staff accept and use technology goes through four process stages. The first stage of the process has to do with access to the technology. The second stage is the faculty member’s awareness of the technology. The third stage is mastery while the last stage was application. The second stage is very vital as the awareness of the technology sets the stage for its mastery and application. In this study setting, Ahmadu Bello University has adopted Moodle e-learning platform since 2015. This means there is access to the technology, the next stage which is that of awareness is what lecturers are complaining of. This will invariably lead to the low usage of Moodle.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the factors that influence the use of Moodle e-learning platform by Lecturers in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria include lack of technical support and lack of awareness. These two factors explain the abysmal level of use of the Moodle e-learning Platform in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

Recommendation

Based on the finding of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. The Management of the faculty should request for two technical support staffs from the Institute of Computing and Information and communication technology (ICICT) to be stationed in the faculty digital centre to cater for technical problems that lecturers might encounter in the use of Moodle e-learning platform and to train lecturers periodically.

- b. The University management should institute a policy that will require Lecturers use of Moodle e-learning platform as a requirement for their promotion. This will go a long way in motivating lecturers to acquire the skills needed to use Moodle e-learning platform.

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