

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNET ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The academic community in Nigeria was one of the early users of the Internet. The benefits in terms of communication and access to reading materials led some Universities to invest in providing Internet infrastructure on their campuses. The investment costs are high and there is a need to prove the usefulness of the Internet. This study assumes that students in tertiary institutions use the Internet as a knowledge acquisition tool and that its use affects academic performance. This exploratory research made use of two tertiary institutions located in Oyo State, Nigeria (which institutions?) that had and did not have access to the Internet. Pre- and post- tests were carried out using a questionnaire and an aptitude test on students in science-based courses before and after Internet use. The results showed a significant difference in academic performance between those who had Internet access and those without.

Key words: education, academic performance, students, Internet use, Nigeria

RESUME

La communauté académique Nigérienne était un des premiers utilisateurs de la technologie d'Internet. Les bénéfices au niveau de la communication d'information et l'accès aux matières pédagogiques ont poussés des Universités à investir dans les infrastructures d'Internet. Le prix de l'investissement est lourd et il y a la nécessité de montrer l'importance de ce dernier. Cette étude suppose qu'étudiants dans institutions tertiaires utilisent l'Internet comme un moyen d'acquisition de la connaissance et que son emploi affecte les performances académiques. Cette étude exploratoire a utilisé deux institutions tertiaires dans l'état d'Oyo au Nigeria. Quelques-unes des institutions avaient l'accès à l'Internet et les autres n'avaient pas. Les enquêtes ont été administrées en utilisant les questionnaires et une test mental des étudiants a été fait dans le but de vérifier leur compréhension cognitive au niveau des métiers scientifiques avant et après la utilisation de technologie d'Internet. Les résultats ont montré qu'il y a une différence considérable au niveau de performance académique entre les étudiants qui ont accès à l'Internet par rapport les autres qui n'ont pas.

mots-clés : education, academic performance, students, Internet use, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The commercialization of the Internet in Nigeria has changed the information flows and systems. The Internet is now being used in a variety of ways to

promote productivity, communication, business, advertisement, and marketing in Nigeria. Internet usage for education is also receiving recognition because of

the need by most institutions to operate distance-learning programs and the need to connect academic staff to global resources for improved teaching and research.

The Internet got to Nigeria in 1995 when the email service of the Internet was introduced through dial-up to a few users. The year 2000 was the Internet year in Nigeria with many users having access to the Internet through cyber cafés connected to Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Most of the Internet awareness took place in Lagos, but other towns too were caught up in the Internet frenzy.

A number of Nigerian Universities such as University of Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University, and University of Jos, have Internet facilities while other Universities are at various stages of implementation. These institutions provided Internet access to enhance the research capabilities of its staff and to allow them communicate and collaborate with other researchers.

This experimental study made use of two tertiary institutions located in the same state in the south western part of Nigeria. The institutions are University of Ibadan, Ibadan and Ladoko Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho. Ibadan is the state capital for Oyo State, while Ogbomosho is a prominent trading town in the state. The five Departments selected for the study are available in both institutions and run identical courses.

The University of Ibadan got connected to the Internet in the year 2001 through one of the ISPs in the town, but it now has its own ISP facilities. The Internet service is currently limited to academic staff while students who