

# **E-LEARNING PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper looks into E-learning practices in Higher Education in Nigeria. E-learning is a learning strategy which employs internet technologies to communicate information between lecturers and students in institutions of higher education. Higher education is education beyond the secondary school level which includes the University, Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, etc. The aim of e-learning in higher education is to create a conducive environment where lecturers and students can interact through teaching and learning online through the web, internet etc. The importance of e-learning in higher education is that it facilitates teaching and learning between lecturers and students, it bridges the gap between lecturers and students. The various forms of e-learning were provided and they include webinars, mobile learning, virtual classrooms, etc. The characteristics of e-learning practices were also provided. The author provided advantages and disadvantages of e-learning practices in higher education. Problems of e-learning practices were given in that there is inadequacy of e-learning facilities and lack of funds to maintain them. Conclusions were made and the following suggestions were given; different e-learning facilities should be provided to facilitate e-learning in higher education, more people should be given incentive to study ICT and lecturers should undergo in-service training.*

**Keywords:** Learning, Practice, E-Learning, Higher Education

Psychologists are of the view that learning is the outcome of experience. Marx(1971) defined learning as a relatively enduring change in behavior which is a function of prior behavior or practice. Learning is at times defined as a change in an individual, caused by experience. (Driscoll, 2000; Hill,2002; Schunk, 2004) Cited in (Egbochuku,2012).

Wikipedia defines practice as the act of rehearsing behaviour over and over, or engaging in an activity again and again, for the purpose of improving or mastering it, as in the phrase, “Practice makes perfect.”

### **Concept of E-Learning**

There are many terms used to describe learning that is delivered online, via the internet, ranging from distance education, to computerized electronic learning, online learning, internet learning and many others. We define e-learning as courses that are specifically delivered via the internet to somewhere other than the classroom where the professor is teaching. It is not a course delivered via a DVD or CD-ROM, video tape or over a television channel. It is interactive in that you can also communicate with your teacher, professors or other students in your class, and sometimes it is delivered live. Where you can “electronically” raise your hand and interact in real time and sometimes it is a lecture that has been prerecorded. There is always a teacher or professor interacting/communicating with you and grading your participation, your assignments and your test.

According to (Laurillard, 2004), E-learning describes the interaction in which students use different types of I.C.T in their learning processes. Education in a knowledge society context is given a key role for developing new ideas in learning and teaching through E-learning (Knewton, N.D.). Hedge and Hayward (2004), defined E-learning as an innovative approach for delivering electronically mediated, well-designed, learner-centered and interactive learning environments to anyone, anyplace, anytime by utilizing the internet and digital technologies concerned with instructional design principles. E-learning which is also known as web-based learning is defined as the delivery of education in a flexible way through the use of the internet to support individual learning or organizational performance goals. (Clark and Mayer,2011 and

Maqableh, Rajab, Quteshat, Khatib, and Karajeh 2015). According to Arasteh, Pirahesh, and Zakeri, (2014), Draghici, Popescu, Fistis, and Borca, (2014) and Mustea, Muresan, and Herman, (2014); E-learning is the method which allows people especially students to take courses from home or anywhere as he/she can access the internet, among other platforms such as peer-to-peer, client-server and web services. E-learning is the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to deliver information for education where instructors and learners are separated by distance, time or both in order to enhance the learner's learning experience and performance. (Keller, Hrastinski, and Carlsson, 2007; Tarhini, Hone, Liu, and Tarhini, 2016). Horton (2011) defines e-learning as a set of instructions delivered via all electronic media such as the internet, intranets and extranets.

E-learning is learning using electronic technologies to gain access to the educational curriculum outside of the normal classroom setting. In most instances, it refers to a programme delivered online. The concept of E-learning refers among other things, to the way that teachers and students in today's educational system use different information and communication technologies (ICT) for teaching and learning activities in classroom. E-learning is simple. E-learning is learning utilizing electronic technologies to access educational curriculum outside of a traditional classroom. In most cases, it refers to a course program or degree delivered completely online.

### **Literature Review**

It has been suggested that human competencies that are established from a learning culture could contribute to the competitiveness of the enterprise (Murray and Donegan 2003). Further advancement of ICT has also created opportunities for education and training materials to be made accessible (Leacock 2005) electronically through e learning which facilitates organizational learning in term of its flexibility, delivery and its obvious economic benefits such as reduction of costs, time and quality of training (Comacchio and Scapolan ,2004). Aduwa-ogiegbaen and Iyamu (12) were emphatic that in Nigeria, a formidable obstacle to the use of information and communication technology is infrastructure and

deficiencies. Olukulehin noted that the infrastructure necessary for developing an effective ICT platform is lacking in Nigeria. There isn't enough human skills and knowledge to fully integrate ICT into education(B4). Mac-Ikemenjima (4) observed that there are inadequate ICT infrastructure including computer hardware and software and bandwidth access, lack of skilled manpower to manage available systems and inadequate training facilities for ICT education at the tertiary level. In corroboration Oyo et al (9) added that, there are inadequate or non-availability of internet institutions. There are acute shortages of trained personnel who can perform applications of software, operating systems.

Before E-learning, the following teaching and learning methods were carried out in schools;

The use of chalk boards to teach

The use of pen/pencil and paper to take down notes

The use of hard cover text books for research work.

Writing of assignments and group work on paper.

Poor way of disseminating information to students.

### **Forms of E-learning**

1. **Webinars:** A webinar is a training delivered over the web using videoconferencing software. The advantageous part of this form of e-learning is that the instructor would not only interact with an individual learner but a large group of learners. This form of e-learning resembles a typical classroom setting where there is a lecturer and a large number of students.

2. **Mobile Learning:** Mobile learning is a breakthrough in the e-learning world. In this form of e-learning, the learning material is accessed by the learners through their mobile devices, at anyplace and at anytime. In this type of e-learning, both the instructor and learners interact and share knowledge either offline or online. It is a blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning.

3. **Virtual classroom:** This form of e-learning allows learners to attain training in the comfort of their homes. Learners do not need to leave their homes just to attend a training session. This form of e-learning is

achieved through web conferencing, video conferencing, etc to enable learners attend training and communicate with their instructors.

4. **CD-ROM based learning:** The learning material is recorded or copied into a CD and is accessed on the system without the use of the internet. Although this is considered as an outdated form of e-learning, few organizations are still using this form of e-learning to distribute training material.

### **Characteristics of E-learning**

According to CommLab India (2018), the characteristics of e-learning are:

- E-learning courses are created because there is a learning need.
- E-learning is connected to electronic media.
- E-learning courses always have assessments.
- E-learning is self-paced and reaches a wider audience.
- An e-learning course is designed with one or more learning objectives in mind.
- The development of e-learning has a streamlined process.
- An e-learning course is created with a particular audience and its needs in mind.
- E-learning is created with the help of Subject Matter Experts.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of E-learning**

Callian and Framework (2010) and Garrison (2011) identified various advantages of e-learning:

- Less expensive to deliver, affordable and saves time: With e-learning, one can download learning material at an affordable price.
- Flexibility in terms of availability: Learners can access learning materials at any place and at any time.
- E-learning allows more effective interaction between the learners and their instructors through the use of e-mails, discussion boards and chat room.
- The e-learning could improve the quality of teaching and learning as it supports the face-to face teaching approaches.

- It helps learners to develop knowledge of using the latest technologies and the Internet.
- Learning is done at one's own pace and this reduces stress levels and increases satisfaction and retention of what has been taught.
- It allows for access to global resources and materials that meet students; level of knowledge and interest.

Other advantages of e-learning practices are:

- It is very helpful to students who do not have the time or funds to attend proper universities due to some challenges.
- It encourages individual growth of the student who will have to depend on himself to learn.

Bouhnik and Marcus (2006) provided disadvantages of e-learning:

- Lack of a firm framework to encourage students to learn.
- Absence of a learning atmosphere in e-learning systems.
- A high level of self-discipline or self-direct is required, learners with low motivation or bad study habits may fall behind.
- The distance-learning format minimizes the level of contact, e-learning lacks interpersonal and direct interaction among students and teachers.
- When compared to the face-to-face learning, the learning process is less efficient.

Other disadvantages of e-learning include:

- Some online teaching programs may be faulty or have security technicalities.
- Online classes usually offer only objective questions which hinders the students' skills in practical work.
- It is difficult to ascertain if the student's assignments are original and not copied from the internet.
- Students cannot ask for clarity about a topic from the lecturer.

Problems of E-learning Practices in Higher Education in Nigeria.

- Inadequate e-learning facilities: E-learning facilities in institutions of higher education are very few in number. Thus, only few students engage in e-learning practices.

- Lack of training: Most of the students are not trained in the use of these facilities for learning.
- Wi-Fi connection: There is a lack of strong wi-fi connection which the students need to gain access to the e-learning courses online.
- Lack of maintenance: Sometimes the E-learning facilities are not being maintained properly. Damaged e-learning facilities are not being fixed on time and this causes a major problem for students when they want to engage in e-learning practices.

### **Conclusion**

The paper looks at e-learning practices in higher education in Nigeria. The paper has shown that there has been a drastic change from the traditional method of teaching and learning which involves the use of blackboard and chalk, cardboard chats, etc. to the modern form of learning which involves the use of e-learning. E-learning practices though advantageous to the modern society also has some disadvantages in that some online teaching programs may be faulty or have security technicalities and that online classes usually offer only objective questions which hinders the students' skills in practical work. The problems of e-learning practices in institutions of higher education in Nigeria were also reviewed in the paper and the following suggestions were provided to solve these problems.

### **Suggestions**

The following suggestions were made concerning e-learning in higher education in Nigeria:

1. The government should provide state of the art E-learning facilities that will ease e-learning practices in Nigeria.
2. Lecturers and students should be given adequate training on how to engage in e-learning practices.
3. Wi-fi should be provided as e-learning cannot occur without internet.
4. The federal and state government should provide enough funds for proper maintenance of e-learning facilities in Nigeria higher education.

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