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AN EVALUATION OF THE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT: This study evaluates the use of Information and Communication Technology among Students and Academic staff of the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of 300 students and 100 Academic Staff. It adopted the questionnaire method for collection of data. The study revealed that all respondents use GSM, television/ radio/cassette and internet services. All academic staff respondents (100) and student respondents possess radio/cassette, television, while only 20 academic staff of the hundred respondents possess personal computers. All 300 students' respondent possess GSM, only 30 and 10 possess television and personal computers respectively. All respondent were found to use information and communication technology for accessing current information, keep in touch with friends and relatives and to search for material for assignments and research. The study identified poor networks by operating GSM operators, lack of adequate power supply as some of the barriers to the use of ICT.

INTRODUCTION

Information plays a crucial role in the transformation of the society in today's world. Information has become a precious resource that the progress of individuals, corporate bodies and nations is closely related to their ability to timely harness the information at their disposal. The harnessing of information for proper utilization is done with Information Communication Technology (ICT). In other words, Information and Communication Technology deals with the use of electronic systems to produce, store, process, disseminate and retrieve information. This information can be in form of images, text or sound.

Information and Communication Technology is widely acknowledged to have the capabilities of enhancing man's daily tasks. It has been a fundamental part of everyday life with electrical components spread around the world in form of pictures, text, sound and other kinds of ICT system. Man's daily activities are being positively influenced by the use of Information and Communication Technology.

Information and Communication Technology are research tools and have become important means of information dissemination that is communication for individuals, governments, business, research and educational institutions. He emphasized that the internet represent the largest global computer network linking businesses, individuals and schools throughout the world. The internet provides a way for remote computer center to communicate and share services and resources. It is a global networks linking millions of computers and spanning the entire globe, Ray and Talbot (1999).

THE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN NIGERIA UNIVERSITIES

The use of Information and Communication Technology has increased tremendously in Nigerian Universities. The internet, telephone, the Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) and other information facilities are being used by staff and students in Nigerian Universities for research and to meet other educational and information needs. The electronic

mail (e-mail), an aspect of the internet is commonly used by lecturers and students to exchange mails with other users.

Idowu and Mabawonku, (1999) have observed that Information and Communication Technology can enhance productivity, increase output, lead to more productive tasks in documentation and information processing.

According to Magara (2002), ICT has great potential in bridging information gap between communities, states and countries. Jordan (2003) indicates that there are opportunities on ground for developing countries for training and skill acquisition support outside their environment. According to him, the University of Queensland library in Australia has a programme designed to meet the skill web of information professionals in developing countries.

Ugah (2005) has observed that ICT can offer people or groups the probabilities to overcome friction of distance and constraints of materials. Ward (1990) has stated that ICTs have particular relevance even in rural areas, which have been historically characterized in terms of their economic and social peripherality. It has eliminated the necessity of physical proximity from a whole host of economic, social and political activities. Rural areas, are potentially becoming more attractive places for business services and for people to relocate. Omogor (2006) has observed that information transfer bottlenecks in processing order, acquisition of variety of products, learning, teaching and research materials have been considerably removed with the application of ICT.

Elaturoti (1988) has analyzed the uses of the internet as follows: distribution application file transfers, interactive application, directing service, electronic mails. File transfer is used for exchange file; through File Transfer Protocol (FTP). File transfer protocol enable users to access enormous database programme images. Other tools for internet access include Telnet, a programme for conducting sessions on remote hosts gopher, is a means to find and retrieve file and programmes on specific topics. Gopher, is an example of a client-server system. It is designed to enable user to connect to a computer on the internet thus browsing through the host of files that are available on the remote computer.

Wide Area Information Server (WAIS)

WAIS is an Internet indexing and searching mechanism designed to help end users find and retrieve information over the network by providing efficient search materials. Users can ask for general topics, search for key words and phrases. It searches a set of databases that have been indexed with a keyword and return addresses where the documents can be located.

World Wide Web (WWW)

This is a vast collection of interconnected pages of information that are stored on computers around the world that are connected to the internet. The web allows quick access to information that is stored as text, pictures, video. The Web is based upon a set of standards for storing, retrieving and manipulating information, using a special tool called a web browser. The most widely used browsers are Netscape Navigator and Microsoft explorer. These use Graphic User Interfaces (GUI) and require multimedia hardware and software. Similar capabilities, but without graphics are provided by lynx; a text-based browser developed by the University of Kansas (Turban, et al., 1999). Documents available on the web contain links used to link documents either internal or external that has a connection to the internet.

ICT and its Implications to Educational Institutions

Information sharing between many sites on the internet and the use of the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) among researchers, institutions and individuals offers educational institutions various services that have been developed over years. The internet

through its many resources allow many users to share information with one another and enable persons to communicate irrespective of geographical boundaries. Apart from the chat programme which allows users to send messages to people who are connected to the same channel of communication at the same time, the newsgroup also known as Usenet are organized directory which are divided into categories and sub-categories and allows access to valuable information from resources around the globe. It is used to obtain new important resources for learning and teaching.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive method. The method involves the collection of data for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions(s) prevailing practices in the use of Information Communication Technology by students and staff of the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The target population were three hundred students and one hundred academic staff were used.

DATA COLLECTION

The questionnaire was used to collect information on the type of ICT used, possession of ICT and reason for usage by students and academic staff of University of Uyo. In selecting the sample, the availability sampling technique was used. In this method all the students and academic staff who came to the library within the period of the study were chosen as prospective respondents. This method was effective and adequate because respondents were easily located and the questionnaire administered to them at the library porters points. Questionnaire were filled by respondents and returned to the researcher on the spot. Four hundred questionnaires were produced and distributed to three hundred students and hundred academic staff.

DATA ANALYSIS

Out of three hundred questionnaires distributed to students, and one hundred to academic staff, all were found to be useful and were correctly completed. This represents 100% response respectively.

Table 1: Types of ICT used by respondents.

ICT Facility	Student	Response No.	%	Staff	Response No.
GSM	300	300	100	100	100
Television /VCD	300	300	100	100	100
Internet	300	300	100	100	100
Total	300	300	100	100	100

Table 1 indicates that all respondents (300 students) and 100 (Academic staff) use GSM, television/VCD and Internet representing a 100% response.

Table 2: ICT facilities possessed by respondents.

ICT Facility	Student	Response No.	%	Staff	Response No.	%
GSM	300	300	100	100	100	100
Television	300	30	10	100	100	100
Radio/Cassette	300	300	100	100	100	100
Personal Computer	300	10	3.33	100	20	20

Table 2 indicates that out of three hundred (300) student respondents, all have GSM representing 100% response, 30 have television representing 10% response, all three hundred (300) have radio cassette representing 100% response while only 10 have personal computer representing 3.33%.

The response of staff respondents shows that out of 100 respondents, all have GSM, television and radio cassette respectively representing 100% response while only 20 have personal computers representing 20%.

Table 3: Reasons for using ICT by respondents.

Factors (Reasons)	Responses	%
Accessing current information	400	100
Keep in touch with friends and relatives	400	100
Quick relay of information	400	100
Search for materials for research and assignment	400	100

Table 3 indicates that all students and staff respondents use ICT to get access to current information, to keep in touch with friends and relations, for fast relay of information and to search for materials for research purposes and assignment/lectures.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected and findings revealed that out of the 300 students and 100 staff respondents, all possess GSM and radio cassettes. 30 and 10 student respondents possess television and personal computer respectively. 100 staff respondents (100%) possess television, GSM and radio cassettes respectively. 20 staff respondents (20%) only possess personal computer. However, 90% of the student respondents who do not possess television say they make use of television available in the hostels common room to listen to news and watch programmes. Also 80% of both students and staff respondents say they make use of the cybercafé to access the internet for access to information. The study revealed that though all students and staff respondents have GSM phone, 20% of staff and student respondents say they experience great difficulty in purchasing recharge cards and prefers to use commercial GSM call centres to transmit information to friends and relations. The research revealed that the University of Uyo has internet services. Besides there are over twenty (20) commercial cybercafés within and outside the university environment which enable students and staff who have no personal access to the internet services to employ such for information for assignment and research respectively. A service charge of a hundred naira for an hour use of internet services cyber café is also affordable. This implies that staff and students of the University of Uyo have been part of the global village. They are able to access, transmit and receive information as at when needed. Research also shows that the use of ICT among students and staff have increased tremendously over the years, especially with the possession of GSM by all respondents selected for study.

Barriers to Use of ICT

The following problems were revealed from the research

- (i) Poor network by operating GSM operators.
- (ii) Lack of adequate power supply.
- (iii) Insufficient availability of ICT system in commercial cybercafés leading to waste of time by prospective users.
- (iv) Inadequate personnel to maintain the ICT systems thereby rendering many systems inactive.
- (v) Most students and staff are still computer illiterate, as a result exhibit lukewarm attitude to the use of some ICT facilities.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the world is now a global village with the use of the internet. Fortunately the University of Uyo is now connected to the internet. This will bring much gain in terms of access and provision of online information. Problems, which have acted as hindrances to the use of ICT facilities must be looked into and eliminated or reduce to the barest minimum. This will help minimize the problems encountered by students and staff of the Universities in the process of using ICT. This will also ensure that current materials are available to users at the right time. The University Management must encourage practical computer literacy among students and staff through seminar, training programmes and workshops, tailored to meeting the needs of staff and students of the University.

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