PROMOTING INTERNET ACCESSIBILITY AND USE BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AS A POSITIVE STEP TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Computer and the internet have changed the way we read the newspaper, transact business, entertain ourselves, learn, study and communicate. What goes on in the school system today is impacted upon by technology, and its use will likely affect the skills that today's children learn in school and the way they are taught to function in the world. Adopting a survey type of descriptive research, this study examined the internet accessibility and extent of use by undergraduates of Lagos State University and made case for the improvement of internet access to undergraduates, and total integration of its use into the various academic programmes of the university as an assured step towards a sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Education and national development as concepts have always been regarded as complimentary since education is seen by most people, societies and nations as a means of social mobilization and the key to national development. According to Odumosu (2005), education is an activity that goes on in a society mostly through schools, colleges and universities; and its aims and methods depend on the nature of the society in which it takes place. The general purpose of education has always been; the developments of individuals in the society to enable them contribute meaningfully towards its growth and development. It becomes imperative to examine some other concepts such as growth, development, and sustainable *development which are germane to this paper. Growth is an* aspect of development which according to Odumosu (2005) refers to increase usually in quantities, such as size or economic activity, production, profit etc. while development on the other hand, encompasses growth in terms of increase in quantities as well *improved qualities. National development* therefore refers to the wealth and resources, level of organization, state of infrastructure, and technological status. All these are indices used in delineating developing and developed nations which narrow down to the provision of quality life for the citizenry. In recent past, development issues have shifted focus to well coordinated use of resources, and renewable and reusable resources, maintenance, modification, preservation and conservation strategies. The emphasis at present is on a sustainable development which satisfies the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future to meet their own needs. It is a process in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations. By implication, the sustainability of a nation's development relies on the types and quality of education available which invariably depends on communication. Communication is one of the structures of organization of society, and how effective it is influences economic growth and political development. For instance, without adequate communication, human activities will not go beyond the cave man stage. Communication facilitates the sharing of ideas, promotes understanding, and provides avenue for expressing thoughts and obtaining feedback. It also fosters interpersonal relationships. Education in whatever form it takes is not complete without effective communication. Communication as a process provides the link between levels of staff and enables information, instruction and decision to be conveyed from their point of origin to all those who needs to be informed". The level of staff here implies the teachers, with the way and manner they involve their students in a learning process. In the world today, information and communication technologies (ICT) has increasingly become a powerful tool for participating in global markets, promoting political accountability, improving the delivery of basic services, and enhancing local development opportunities. In other word, they are tools that singularly and dramatically continued to change the behavioural pattern of people and corporate entities by determining the way they socialize, learn, shop, conduct business, communicate and interact for multi-dimensional mutual reasons. The advent of computer technology and subsequently the

internet "a communication networks among computers" have revolutionized the communication process and every facet of human endeavour that relies on communication for sustainability. The task embarked upon by this paper was to look at students in the university which is the climax of Nigerian education system, and who are expected to sustain the present pace of national development and as well move the country to higher level in the comity of nations and find out how ready they are in taking up the challenges of sustainable development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to analyze the use of internet and related issues among the undergraduates of the Lagos State University. It specifically sought to establish where and how undergraduates have access to the internet and their reasons for using the internet.

Research Questions

As a guide to the study, the following questions were raised to be answered:
i.   How do undergraduates of Lagos State University get access to the internet?
ii.   What do undergraduates of Lagos State University use internet for?

Research Design

The study adopted a survey type of descriptive research design.

Population of the Study

The target population of the study comprised all undergraduates of Lagos State University, while the accessible population of the study comprised undergraduates from five faculties within the main campus at Ojo.

Adopting a simple random sampling technique, a total of three hundred (300) students were randomly taken from all the five faculties at the Ojo campus i.e. 10 students from each department.

Instruments for Data Collection

A self developed questionnaire was employed in carrying out the study. The questionnaire has two main sections.

Section A- sought for personal information of respondents while the section B is a rating scale on accessibility and use of the internet by respondents.
The questionnaire was given to experts in tests and evaluation for face and content validity and subjected to test-re-test reliability using some part-time students; responses from the questionnaire were correlated using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient which gave r values of 0.72.

Procedure for Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire was personally administered on selected students from each department with the assistance of colleagues from other faculties, and all questionnaire were retrieved back immediately for analysis. The analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics and graphical illustrations.

Results

FACULTIES	RESPONDENTS	HOME %	LIBRARY %	CYBERCAFES %	ICT CENTRE %	MOBILE PHONE %
EDUCATION	40	42.5	1.25	58.13	1.25	41.25
SCIENCE	80	33.13	4.06	51.88	2.19	25.94
MANAGEMENT SCIENCES	70	31.07	6.07	62.5	7.5	31.43
SOCIAL SCIENCE	50	17	5	52.5	2	24.5
ARTS	60	17.5	2.92	61.25	1.67	18.33
TOTAL/ AVERAGE %	300	28.84	3.86	57.25	2.92	28.29

ACCESSIBILITY OF UNDERGRADUATES TO THE INTERNET

Responses from the questionnaire on student's accessibility to the internet were pooled together for analysis using simple percentage and frequency counts. The result obtained is presented in table 1 below:

Table 1: Undergraduates Accessibility to the Internet From the analysis in table 1 above, majority of the students sampled access the internet through the cybercafé with average of 57.25%. This is followed by Home access and mobile phones with average percentage of 28.84 and 28.29 respectively. On the contrary, the percentage of students accessing the internet through the library and the university ICT center is very small (3.86 and 2.92 respectively. This result revealed that the sampled students are aware of the capability of the internet hence they make effort to use it by visiting the commercial cybercafé and exploring the facilities provided by the telecoms operators.

The results further presented graphically in figure 1 below for clarity.
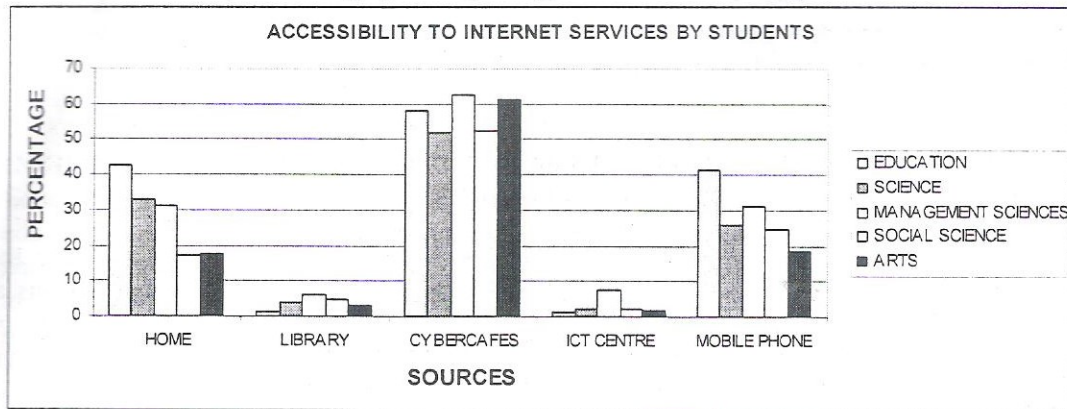

Fig 1: Accessibility to Internet by Students

EXTENT OF INTERNET USE BY STUDENTS

Similarly, responses from the questionnaire on students' extent of internet usage were pooled together for analysis using simple percentage and frequency counts. The result obtained is presented in table 2 below:

FACULTIES	RESPON DENTS	E-MAIL %	CHAT TING %	ASSIGN MENT %	RESE ARCH %	DOWN LOAD %	NEWS %
EDUCATION	40	62.5	52.5	43.75	40	27.5	41.25
SCIENCE	80	59.06	50.9	40	34.1	29.1	44
MANAGEMENT SCIENCES	70	65	56.43	43.93	43.2	31.8	42.5
SOCIAL SCIENCE	50	59.5	36.5	28.5	18.5	16.5	27
ARTS	60	60	54.17	27.5	15.42	17.92	35
TOTAL/ AVERAGE %	300	61.21	50.1	36.75	30.24	24.56	37.95

As shown in table 2 above, the most frequent use of internet services by the sampled students was for sending and receiving electronic mail (61.21%). This is followed by on-line chatting with friends (50.1%). Listening to News, Carrying out assignments and conducting research followed in that order with average percentage score of 37.95, 36.75 and 30.24 respectively. The least use of the internet by the sampled students was for download with average percentage score of 24.56%.

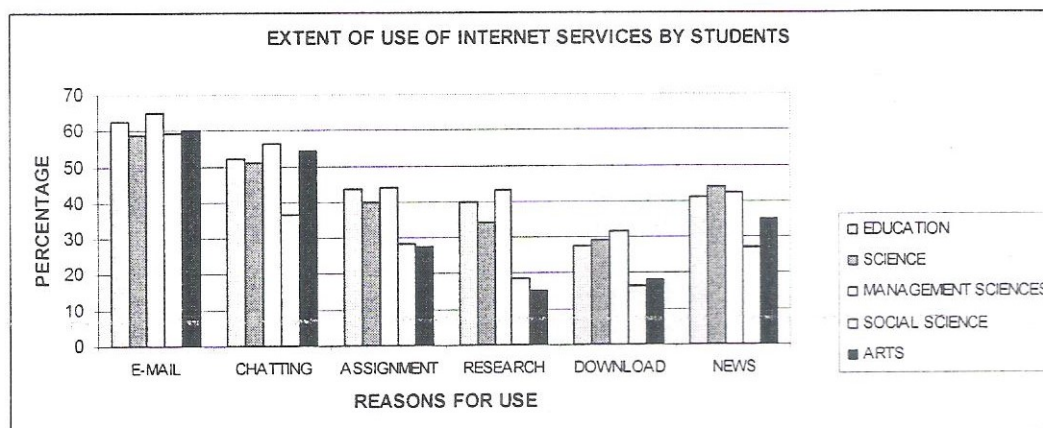This result is also presented in figure 2 below for clarity.

Fig 2: Extent of Use of Internet Services by Students.

From the results of the study as presented above, most undergraduates of Lagos State University get access to the internet at the cybercafé, at home and on their mobile phones, and majority of the students use the internet for checking and sending e-mails, and on-line chatting with friends. Reasonable percentages of the students also use the internet for carrying out academic assignments and accessing news.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

It has been established by this study that undergraduates are aware of the capability of the internet and that they make efforts to explore this capabilities within the limit of resources at their disposal. So many factors are linked with exploring the internet maximally for proper development. These include availability, knowledge of students and teachers to use the computer and integrating it to their academic programmes, pedagogical practices of University Teachers etc. This paper is concerned with proffering solutions for a sustainable development in all ramifications. Therefore, this study has shown that providing access to the internet will ensure that all university students are technology compliant and they will be able to tap every opportunity available on the internet for self- development and eventually develop the country at large.

Recommendations

These findings indicate that there are three basic needs.

1. One is a need for purchasing sufficient hardware and software for schools. Computers and computer-related technologies should be a part of classroom teaching activities in the universities with adequate access to the internet. This will allow an opportunity for teacher to become familiar with computers and apply computer technology to his/her instruction.

2. The second is a need for in-service training in computer technology. Particularly because modern society and information change rapidly, pre-service education is no longer enough for teachers to keep abreast with current trends and maintain a high quality of instruction. The effectiveness of teachers is a determinant to educational quality, and in-service training is important to enhance the effectiveness of teachers. Teachers need to receive training which will build their confidence so that they can become capable of dealing with available technology. They need to have continuous training so that they are up to- date with the latest technology. In-service training sessions should have a major emphasis on preparing participants to immediately make use of their new knowledge and skills.

3. The third need relates to training teachers to become effective users of the Internet. They need to be able to search the Internet and develop materials for their classes by using the Internet. Teachers need to receive training to use technology tools to design, develop, publish, and present products (e.g., Web pages and videotapes) using technology resources that demonstrate and communicate curriculum concepts to students inside and outside the classroom.

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