

POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' ACCESSIBILITY TO AND UTILIZATION OF ICT (INTERNET)

MUHAMMAD RABI'U BELLO

School Of Science and Science Education,
Federal University Of Technology, Minna.

ABSTRACT

This study examined Post Graduate Students (PGS) accessibility to and utilization of ICT, i.e. internet facilities in pursuit of academic excellence. The population of the students formed the study population. A questioner was formulated to test the Null hypotheses at $\alpha 0.05$. There was no significance difference between males and females PGS in their literacy level, which was not rejected. Charts were also used to describe some of the research questions. A high proportion of PGS goes to the internet occasionally and is usually assisted by café attendants and friends to browse the net. It was suggested among others that, the university should invest heavenly into ICT to develop a critical mass of staff and students that can harness and effectively utilize the internet.

Introduction

The university is the centre of academic excellence with teaching, research and dissemination of knowledge playing a pivotal role. Igwebuike (2003), views the university as a community of scholars with the sole aim of conducting research and extending frontiers of knowledge. Aina,(2004) defines information technology (IT) thus,

As an omnibus term that combines Computers and Telecommunications technology; hence it is sometimes called information and communication technology (ICT). It is concerned with the

technology used in handling, acquiring, processing, storing and disseminating information.

Universities play leading roles in research, ICT facilities provide readers access to academic information from all parts of the globe. Omoniwa, (2003) observed that, it has broken the barrier which distance creates in communication thus reducing the world to a global village. Universities libraries should be equipped with ICT facilities that will provide Electronic information of full text data bases of journals and e-Books. In Canada, Loughheed, (2004) mentioned that university libraries avail users with on-line masters and doctoral theses. There should not be limitations to ICT facilities and higher institutions in Nigeria and Africa can take advantage of free digital library of congress, a paperless library. It has monographs, reference sources, journals, newsletters, theses, dissertations and textbooks. ICT is capable of making learning effective and permanent. The question is, are there enough computers and ICT to warrant accessibility and utilization? The internet technology was created by Vinton Cerf in the early 1973 in the United State of America (USA) as a project conducted by the Advanced Research Project Agency (ARPA) which is part of US department of defence. The admiration of computers did not leave out the military, medical and business sector in Europe and America. In order to respond to the needs of the society, computers were integrated into schools in the 1960s (Okebukola, as cited in Agbatogun, 2006).

The internet is network of networks, a society of interconnected computers. "Internet" simply means the "world wide assemblage" who connects different types of computers together basically in private, government, academic and individuals to generate particular information. The emergence of internet café in Nigerian universities and communities has basically re-defined the boundaries of the lecture theatres / halls. The National Universities Commission (NUC) as a deliberate policy initiated the move to get Nigerian Universities to embrace ICT through its Universities management Information system (NUMIS), project.

Adoption of ICT has brought many challenges; the boundaries of the classrooms have been expanded. Teachers and students are provided with limitless opportunities of been linked up to the information "Super highway" thereby enjoying what may be referred as to as "academic cyber freedom". This new found cyber freedom has made the traditional and conservative teacher centered learning less viable. Nigerians at various levels of education should be brought into contact with this new modern tool, so that they can use it, appreciate its potentials, understand its workings and learn how to apply it to solve every

day's problems. It has also been discovered that, negative attitude of some students to the use of internet, could be as a result of their techno-phobic nature. It also apply to students who have natural liking for the internet, they suffer techno-phobia (Fryer, 2002).

The utilitarian value of ICT will practically change the future of our country: the fact that the future of our educational development depends on modern technology cannot be over emphasized. This is not too comfortable, because skills demand profile globally has shown that internet and network skills top the list of highly sought after skills followed by programming skills. (Marilla, 2000).

According to Nwosu (2003), effective learning in science occurs when learners develop the ability to purposefully access information from a variety of sources, analyze and evaluate the information and then integrate it to construct a personal knowledge base from which to make intelligent decisions. All these are made possible by the internet.

The internet can be used in a variety of forms. Its capabilities include the following:

- e-mail:-support interpersonnel communication.
- Entertainment: - users of internet can relax with various forms of games, news and sports.
- Academic literatures: - provide reservoir for academic materials.

This study is in support of Ezeliora (2003) who opined that, Nigerian's education system has not availed itself of this unending valuable use of the internet. This has therefore generated the curiosity to inquire about the accessibility to and the utilization of the ICT facilities in, and outside the university by post graduate students of faculty of education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

1. Are internet facilities available and accessible to students?
2. What proportion of Post Graduate Students are computer literate?
3. For what reasons do Post Graduate Students visit the internet?
4. Is there Gender disparity in terms of accessibility to and utilization of internet? and
5. How often do Post Graduate Students browse the internet?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims at finding out:

- Whether internet facilities are available and accessible to students in the university.
- Whether post graduate students in education have background knowledge of computer application.
- Purpose of visiting the internet or cyber cafés.
- Benefits derivable from the internet by students.
- Whether there is gender disparity in terms of accessibility to and utilization of the internet.
- How often do Post graduate Students (PGS) visit the internet?

THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nigerians in all works of life are catching with the global trend of exploring the ICT facilities in all endeavors. The university education system must assimilate digital global “super highway” to meet the challenges of the day. The trend, world over is that Post graduate students programs require internet facilities. This study therefore, is undertaken to investigate whether PG students are conversant with utilizing ICT facilities.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaires were used in collecting data from respondents who answered and returned them immediately. A total of 17 PGS were involved in the study with 11 males and six females.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of this study is the master's (M.Ed.) students of the Faculty of Education and Extension services (FEES) of the year 2006/07, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto. The same group also served as sample of the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN.

A descriptive survey design is adopted for the study. It is used in the analysis of the post graduate students access to and utilization of the ICT.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The sampling techniques employed was purposive because the study population was considered small and so the researcher took the whole population admitted comprising of students studying M.Ed in various disciplines of education ranging from science education, Psychology, primary education, language education and adult education.

INSTRUMENTATION

An instrument titled Questionnaires on Post Graduate Students Accessibility to and Utilization of ICT was administered to the students (QPGSAU). While section A of the questionnaire seeks for demographic information, section B centered on computer literacy level of students, places where they go for browsing or access internet, how often they go to the Net and the purpose of going to the internet.

Suggestions from my colleagues were considered when drafting the instrument and was administered and collected personally with the support of audio-visual center (AVC) assistant of the faculty.

Result Analysis

Table 1: Chi-square(x^2). Showing gender bias of Students to computer literacy.

	YES	NO	TOTAL	x^2_{cal}	x^2_{crit}	df	α
Male	11 (12.46)	11 (9.53)	22	1.5	5.024	1	0.05
Female	6 (4.53)	2 (3.46)	8				
Total	17	13	30				

The figures in parentheses represent the expected frequencies. The table shows the x^2_{cal} is less than x^2_{crit} . This means that there is no significant difference between males and females post graduates in their computer literacy level.

Table 2 shows the percentage of post graduate students with e-mail address.

NUMBER OF PERCENTAGES

RESPONDENTS		
With e-mail	18	60
Without e-mail	12	40

PGS with e-mail address represent 60%, while those without e-mail address represent 40%

Table 3: Ranking order of PGS preference place of browsing.

Distribution	Frequencies	Mean score (x)	Rank
University internet centre (NUNet)	13	43.3	1 st
Internet cafés outside the university.	07	23.3	3 rd
Both	10	33.3	2 nd

The ranking indicates that, the university internet centre (NUNet) is highly frequented by students while few PGS visit internet cafés outside the university.

Fig.1: Bar-Chart showing the frequency distribution of PGS use of the internet.

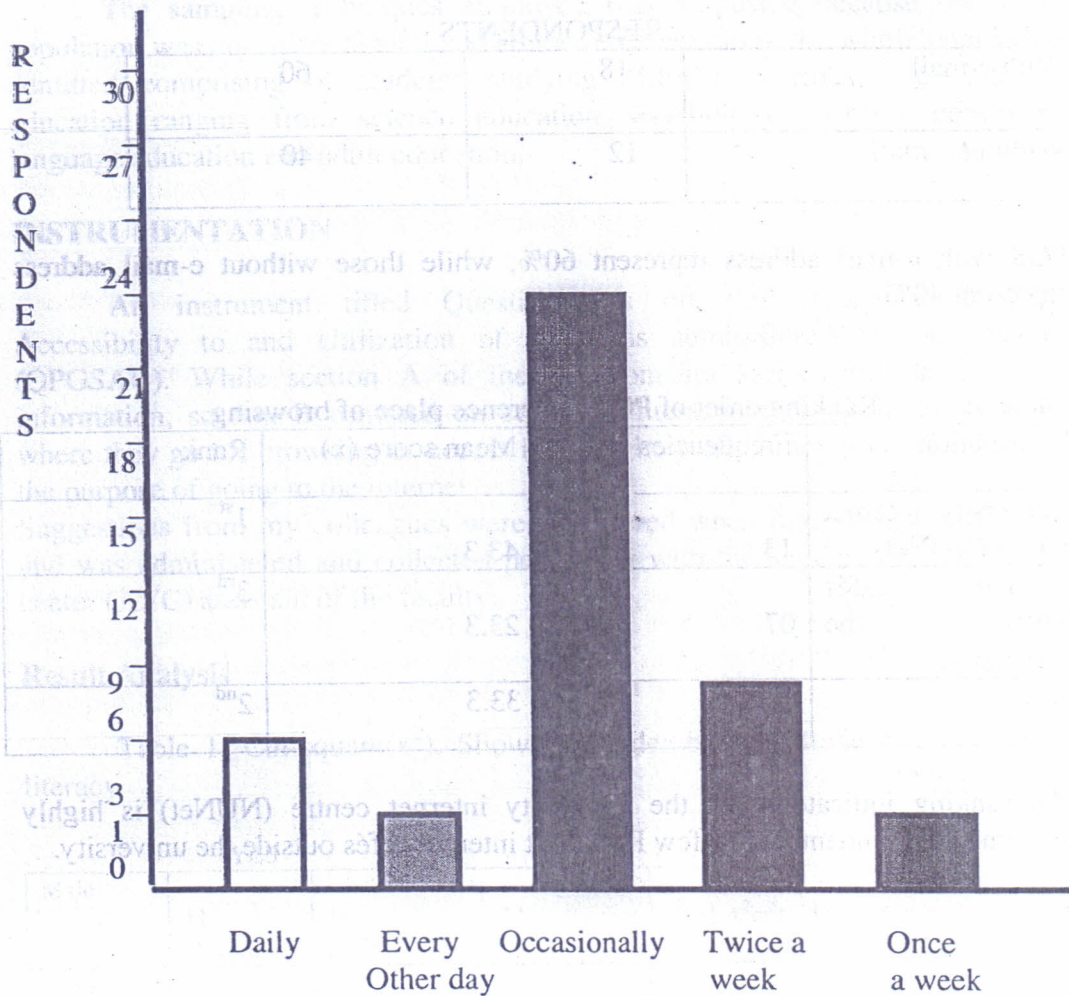


Figure 1 shows that large respondents of PGS frequent the internet centers occasionally, while those that access the internet every other day and once a week are fewer.

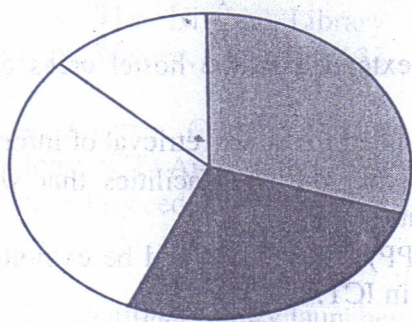
Table 4: shows the purpose of visiting the internet.

	Frequency	Percent (%)
a. for academic literatures	26	86.6%
b. to reduce boredom i.e. playing games and sport	02	6.6%
c. sending e-mail	02	6.6%

The table indicates that 86.6% of PGS utilize the internet do it for academic purpose while 6.6% utilize the internet for either playing games or sending/checking their boxes.

Figure2:

A pie- chart showing how PGS access the internet



- PGS that receive help from café assistant
- PGS that receive help from their friends
- PGS that access the internet on their own
- PGS that access the internet through trial & error

RECOMMENDATIONS

The starting point should be the strengthening of the formal education system, so that it incorporates the effective use of the new technologies. There is the need to reform the nation's educational systems and to embrace the use of ICT by learners and teachers. The government should provide internet connectivity at all levels of education and allocate adequate funds to the educational sectors. Higher institutions should also develop curricula that will ensure the production of graduate students with adequate skills in the utilization of ICT.

There is need for the formulation and implementation of ICT strategies that will deal with issues raised in this paper. The increasing dependence of science teaching on internet is inevitable. Therefore, efforts must be directed towards improving computers literacy skills among students. Kalu and Ekwueme,(2003).Lecturers in Nigerian universities must ensure that they give assignments that will encourage students to search for materials from the internet and submit their project works, dissertation and thesis using ICT facilities.

- The university should invest in human resources to pave way for the creation of a critical mass of teachers and supporting staff that can handle and effectively harness ICT.
- The university internet centre (NUNet) should be expanded to provide more computers as against the 20 computers that are available to thousands of students.
- Internet facilities should be extended to the hostel areas and the rates reduced.
- The bandwidth should be expanded for quick retrieval of information..
- The university library should exploit ICT facilities that will enable it measure up with digital revolution.
- Public Private Partnership (PPP) initiative should be exploited to bridge the digital divide by investing in ICT.

CONCLUSION:

The study revealed that internet facilities are accessible to the PGS while quite a number of them access the internet through assistance of their friends and café attendant, a good number access the internet on their own (figure2). This may be attributed to supplementary role of the internet to school library. The university NUNET, witness students patronage may be due to its proximity and improved facilities (new computers) against what is obtainable before now.

The study revealed that, PGS use the internet occasionally (figure). This is expected because the internet is a reservoir of scholarly literature and the quickest source of information.

It showed that there is no gender bias regarding students' computer literacy. The study also shows that M.Ed students use the internet mainly for academic pursuit, unmindful of other important uses of the internet such as sending and receiving mails, charting, listening to current news, reading daily newspapers, playing games and a lot more.

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