Potential Students' Perceptions on Online Learning as Innovation

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Abstract*: The study was conducted in consideration of increasing African education institutions' interest to offer online learning. The interest has been triggered by the great opportunities available with online education provision and contemporary global trends in such provision. An understanding of potential online students' perceptions on undertaking online studies was deemed an imperative towards institutional determination for prerequisite preparations for effective online education. Twenty potential online students in Dar-es-salaam were randomly selected to participate. Responses of five interviewees were written down during individual interviews; the rest were tape recorded and transcribed for easy interpretation. The interview also involved a focused group discussion session. Findings revealed that all interviewees agree to the claim that online studies are innovations in technology development in Open and Distance Learning (ODL). They were aware of online learning and considered it a viable means for studying despite their varied interpretations of what online learning means. Findings showed online learning as an opportunity clustered under six categories: as reducer of cost, reducer of stress, enhancer for speedy completion of programmes, a platform for collaborative learning and exchange of ideas, provider of flexibility, and an empowerment agent for development. Moreover each interviewee showed some concerns regarding studying through online. The researcher categorized the indentified concerns as challenges falling under the following categories: extending social classifications; disrupting family life and learners' health; increasing cost of life; challenge to the government and other stake holders; challenge to academicians and researchers. On the basis of these findings, the researcher identifies some institutional implications and advices that for any institution intending to initiate online education programmes there should be adequate preparations including but not limited to the provision of online learning awareness programmes to potential learners. Institutions should also prepare and circulate clear and comprehensive information about online learning processes and procedures for individuals who apply and get admitted into online programmes. The institutions intending to initiate online programmes should lobby and mobilize for community online centers where learners can access internet services at affordable rates. They should also encourage learners with financial capability to purchase online learning tools for educational purposes. The researcher suggests intentional programmes that expose existing and potentials learners to online learning and concludes with the implications of the findings to the learners, instructors, institutions and governments. She finally recommends further research into this contemporary area of interest.*

Keywords: Students' Perception, Online Learning, Innovations, Community Online Centers

INTRODUCTION
This study on potential students' perceptions of online learning as innovation was motivated by a realization that:

- Increasing numbers of individuals and institutions are adopting online learning due to increasing confidence and faith in this mode of educational delivery.
- Insufficiently informed initial steps into a profitable engagement such as online learning may result into unforeseen complications that could be avoided through background research into the target area.
- In majority of developed countries more and more [educational] courses are made available entirely online at all levels of instructions (Bates, 2004; Peters, u.d).
- Between 2004 and 2009 there was an increase of around 12-14 % per year enrollments on full online learning in the US alone. There are also claims that by 2008 almost a quarter of all post-secondary education students were taking online courses (Allen and Seamen, 2009) and it is projected that this figure would rise to 81 percent by 2014 (Ambient Insight Research, 2009).
- worldwide the e-learning industry is estimated to be worth over billions of US dollars.
- Majority of educational programmes in low developed countries, including Tanzania, remain traditionally taught. This situation is the case even in open and distance learning (ODL) systems.
- Contemporary advocates of ODL advance the case for adopting online learning.
- The African Council for Distance Education (ACDE), the African Virtual University (AVU), African Distance Education Association (ADEA), South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE) and ODL higher learning institutions such as the Open University of Tanzania (OUT), University of South Africa (UNISA), Kenyatta University (KU), Nigeria Open University (NOU) and Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) are some of the organizations/institutions showing unquestionable determination to embrace online learning in all African countries.
- There is a general advocacy and determination of including online learning in both conventional and ODL systems in order to allow students as well as instructors the flexibility to make choice of an education mode of delivery (Peters, 2004; Laurillard, 1998) and the type of the education created (Mattsson, Johansson & Sandström, 2008; Newman, 1999; hooks, 1994).

The study adopted a qualitative research design involving interview for individuals and a focused group. Interviewees constituted twenty potential online learners of which 10 were female and 10 males with ages ranging from 23 to 53. The intention of the research was to uncover perceptions of online learning from individuals who were likely to engage in online learning. Understanding of such perceptions was considered viable in guiding decisions and activities as the movement towards engaging online learning is gaining momentum in Africa, particularly in Tanzania. The target research population was students largely engaged in print based ODL programmes at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT). OUT has already set up its plans to initiate online learning and already there is a small scale trial in progress. Although the online learning trial is in motion there have not been in-depth studies seeking to gain potential online learners' perceptions of online learning. Exposure to such learners' perceptions will assist in determining learners' readiness and motivation to pursue studies through online provisions. The exposure will further assist in directing decision making and relevant preparations for large scale online learning undertakings at the OUT and hopefully in other African educational institutions.

Perspectives from Existing Literature
Perceptions are referred to as the varied ways through which an individual or a group of individuals ascribe meanings and relevance to particular things or individuals. It implies the process by which an organism detects and interprets information using sensory receptors (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/ perception). In most cases perceptions vary on the

basis of historical or lived experiences within particular environments. Online learning, in this study, is considered a constituent of e-learning. Bates and Poole (2003) and the OECD (2005) express e-learning as a continuum along which different forms of electronic devises are used to assist learning. The e-learning continuum ranges from using electronic devises to enhance conventional or distance learning to the point at which fully online programmes are delivered. At the full online spectrum, the educational programmes become entirely open and distance learning (ODL). Depending on the point, along the e-learning continuum, at which an e-learning programme falls e-learning could qualify as "web enhanced", "web supplemented" or "web dependent." These three levels reflect the increasing intensity of technology use in an education programme (Sloan Commission Reports). Within this continuum perspective, online learning connotes the type of e-learning at which teaching and learning are designed to take place solely using web-based platforms and interfaces. At the level when e-learning attains the full online qualification it gains extensive features favorable for an engaging pedagogy which is lacking in all other forms of education provision modes (Peters, 2004). The pioneer of e-learning Bernard Luskin suggests that at the level of online learning e-learning is not only "electronic" but it is also "exciting, energetic, enthusiastic, emotional, extended, excellent, and educational." Online learning therefore fits appropriately into the 21st media psychology and passion since it makes learning pleasurable and learning outcomes much more attainable.

| Web | Web | Web |
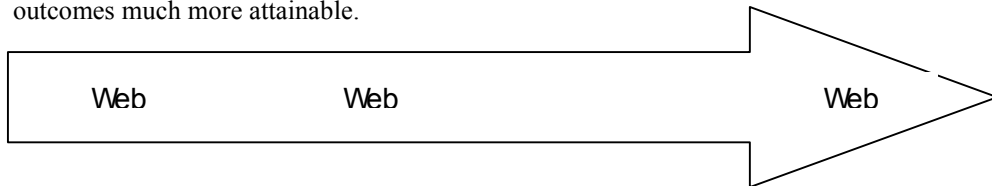
Figure 1: Online Learning Continuum: (Adopted from Sloan Commission Reports)

Online Learning: Poised for an Empowering Education
Determination for online programmes in Africa is an indication of approval of and faith in the system as viable for the development of the continent. If low developed countries (LDCs) are to catch up with the development levels enjoyed by developed countries online, learning should be considered an imperative of the current era. To grasp the logic behind this proposition implicates a grasp of demands within the 21st knowledge and information economy. The later proposition hinges on the conviction that individuals, communities and national development are closely linked to the extent to which populations are exposed to meaningful and relevant education most of which is currently processed, developed, designed, disseminated, retrieved, shared, and evaluated using online provisions. A majority of populations are aware that the more educated people are the more chances there are for attaining desired development goals. Properly designed and managed online education systems have great potentials for extensive outreach a situation that has provided the nomenclature 'distributed learning'. Online education systems have unprecedented potentials for hybridizing or blending educational content, context, pedagogy, instructors, learners and multimedia (Peters, 2004; Laurillard, 1998). These features demonstrate that online learning is poised to bring home an empowering and liberatory education as opposed to the traditionally disempowering education based on classical models of teaching where learners are considered recipients of education from teachers who are sole custodians of education and all its constituent features. Effective online learning is learner-centered and can serve learners and communities better through unlimited flexibility that is lacking in traditional systems of education. Given its extensive outreach potentials, flexibility and possibility for multidisciplinary provisions, online learning is a rich ground for mankind to attain Freires' dream of creating instructors with capability to move learner from a "naïve consciousness" to a "critical consciousness." The latter makes people "aware of the world around them as

something they can change. By looking at the world with their own eyes, by naming the world in their words and not those imposed on them by an oppressor or an invading culture, learners can shift from a naïve consciousness to a critical consciousness (Newman, 1999, p. 45) when they have the freedom of choice of what they want to study and how they want to study it.

Online Pedagogical Opportunities

The pedagogical opportunities offered through online learning technology have been explored as innovative as evidenced in areas of instructional design, social construction of meaning and relevance, emotional impact, convergence of teaching and learning modes; and unlimited space, time and flexibility.

- *Instructional design*: the traditional focus of the curriculum is attained and enhanced through online provisions. A centralized entity or an independent person, normally, an instructor develops a curriculum accompanied by relevant course materials (content) that are electronically developed, deposited, stored, retrieved, distributed, shared, reviewed and modified/updated, reorganized, etc. Unlike other modes of education, online provision has the opportunity to bring millions of programmes or course sites to learners, instructors and other stakeholders at a single location or interface, i.e., computer/laptop/mobile screen without demanding the person(s) to incur costs to move or travel. Online demands for participants' movements are maximally minimized to only involve few manipulations of the body; mostly fingers, hands and epistemic or cognitive processes. Expanded availability of varieties of online educational content opens up for deep and critical thinking while learners are expected to sift the exploding information, choosing only what is suitable for their purposes.

- *Social construction of meaning and relevance*: online learning provides opportunities for creation of communities of teaching and learning. These communities meet through discussion forums, blogs, wiki, e-mails, face book, websites, etc. The meetings enable and encourage collaborative work through discussions, research and other problem-solving approaches. There are opportunities for a multitude of social cultural manipulations that take place with the aim of finding solutions to common problems, generating innovations, and directing social actions. Some of the solutions are intentionally designed but others emerge as unintended coincidences. If instructors and learners have a predisposition to a critical pedagogy as propounded by such scholars as Kincheloe (2008), Freire (1970), Hooks (1994), Nyerere (1994), and Giroux & Aronowitz, creative pedagogy, and reflective pedagogy (Schön, 2005) then online learning can play an important role in the transformation of minds and societies in line with liberatory education which place great emphasis on critical, creative and reflect-in-action thoughts.

- E*motionally*: online learning provides multimedia possibility of enabling and engaging a variety of learning styles. Depending on learners' preferred learning styles, course developers and designers have opportunities to employ different presentation formats in terms of simulations, graphics, virtual reality, sound effects, images, icons, etc. Each of these formats may be employed individually or simultaneously through the single interface of the computer/handset screen. The possibility is an avenue through which each learner is fairly served according to own speeds and need(s). With online provisions, learners can easily and speedily support, encourage and play with each other as well as with their facilitators. These combinations of possibilities allow for maximizing online edutainment facilities to make learning serious and yet pleasurable as suggested by scholars including Hook (1994).

- *Convergence of teaching and learning modes*; with online learning the traditional mode and the ODL mode are blended and one can hardly find a clear line that demarcates the two. The two systems meet through e-library, use of web-based course materials, use online communication systems, learners in the two systems have the freedom to generate their own knowledge as they engage in self-learning as they search for freely available educational materials form open education resources (OERs) and other types of online sites. Coexistence and collective intelligence become realities in education provision through online learning.

- *Availability of unlimited space, time and flexibility*: traditionally space, time and rigidity were considered great threats to educational provision. With online learning these three problems vanish! Online asynchronous provisions allow learners to come into their different learning spaces at their own time of choice. According to Peters (2004), online learning has opportunities for ten types of spaces: instructional spaces, documentation spaces, information spaces, communication spaces, collaborative spaces, exploration spaces, multimedia spaces, hypertext spaces, simulation spaces and spaces for virtual reality (p. 227). Depending on online learning activity these spaces may be employed in combination or each may be used singly at any given time. Additionally, the global reach of most programmes expose online learners to multitudes of programmes and instructors, they can select programmes and instructors of their choice from across global programmes as long as they organize themselves and follow principles and procedures laid down by online programme providers.

Pedagogical Challenges
Among the major pedagogical challenges encountered in online learning as reflected through the literature are:
- Mis-understanding of online learning which has made some practitioners focus on early stages of e-learning and yet refer to the same as online learning. False referencing of online learning has made several institutions hastily adapt this mode of delivery without adequate preparations leading to undesirable outcome and discouragements.

- Majority of learners have no sufficient access to online technology (at home or works) such learners have shown a dislike of online learning. They feel that they incur unwarranted cost as well as loose flexibility and convenience to study anytime and anywhere (McMahon, Gardner, Gray, & Mulhern, 1999). On this basis online learning extends the classificatory agenda keeping social classes and favoring the status quo (Crotty, 2000; McMahon, Gardner, Gray, and Mulhern, 1999). According to McMahon, et al computer access accounts for 50% of the variance that exists among student attitudes toward online learning. This position suggests that 50% of online learners exhibit a negative impact of online learning.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
The findings indicate that the potential online learners are not only aware of the existence of online learning but they also encourage the education system in Tanzania to raise peoples' awareness for online learning. These positions were expressed through such statements as "using online learning is good, we only need to develop necessary competencies to get fully engaged." The potential online learners also indicated that they have some competences in the use of computers. However, all acknowledged they only have "some" knowledge and skills in information communication technologies (ICT). They are not experts in the use of

online technologies but they are ready to learn. Some of the expressions to these propositions were: (i) "I am somehow computer literate," (ii) "I am competent in computer applications (word, internet)," and "I have basic computer skills."

Findings on perceptions of online learning are presented in terms of three categories of conceptualizing online learning in accordance with the respondents' responses. The first category was derived from the way respondents ascribed cognitive or epistemic meanings to the term online learning. The second category was derived by the way the respondents associated online learning to the potential opportunities they consider attainable when online learning is employed. The third category ensued from the challenges that the potential learners fear online learners might encounter when they get engaged in actual online learning. These three categories of perceptions and how they were arrived at are presented in the next sections of this report.

ONLINE LEARNING AS AN EPISTEMIC CONCEPT

Under this category online learning is positioned as a concept; an epistemic aspect expressed through five varied conceptualizations as highlighted by use of italics along some of the potential online learners' statements.

- "online learning is the kind of learning whereby the learner *uses a combination of electronic devices to access information* that is to be learnt and the institution providing such information communicates study materials with learners through the same way."
- "It is the kind of *learning that employs the computer as a gadget. It must be connected to the internet*. You as a student must have a computer and connected to the internet, (a teacher too). You will be taught using various platforms such as Moodle and others. The conversation is through platforms. [learning that employs the computers connected to the Internet … employing such platforms as Moodle]"
- "Online *learning is supported electronically*, whereby the *computer is used as a medium to transfer skills and knowledge*. Courses of study can be taken through this media via the internet, audio or video tape and CD –ROMs"
- "It is also known as *e-learning*. It is *learning experience delivered via a computer and the internet*. All course work & assignments are conducted via the computer and submitted online. There is a tutor who can assist you whilst studying."
- "Online learning is *using web sites and internet*."

The four perspectives extracted from the list of statements from respondents show that online learning is perceived as:

- "The use of a combination of electronic devises to access information."
- "Learning that employs the computers connected to the Internet … employing such platforms as Moodle."
- "Learning supported electronically using computers."
- "e-learning."

An examination of the respondents' extracts shows that potential online learners have different perspectives of what constitutes online learning although there are common explicit and covert elements that they represented. They recognize involvement of electronic devices, use of computers and connection to the internet as major elements of online learning. The definition of online learning presented in the literature review concludes that online learning is a system dependent on online processes in all its practices: academic, administration, financing and support services. On the basis of the varied interpretations one should consider orientation programmes as necessary for all novice online learners. It should 'not be taken for granted' that individuals who enroll for online programmes are sufficiently aware of what

is involved and what is demanded of them when they engage in online learning. Without orientation programmes intended to sensitize novice online learners discouragement and de-motivation may characterize online learners, the potential learners may thus pull out of the system even if they take the initial steps to get admitted.

ONLINE LEARNING AS AN OPPORTUNITY

The respondents identified several areas they considered as online learning opportunities. These areas were arrived at after clustering elements of the responses with meanings covertly or explicitly conveyed implying elements of opportunities as conceptualized by the researcher on the basis of the research findings and lived experiences. Six clusters of opportunities were arrived at in the order of online learning as:

Reducer of cost: Online learning was perceived as an opportunity in reducing cost for studying. Some of the responses directed to this perception are presented in the following statements directly collected from the respondents.

(i) "I expect to waste little energy and time for traveling to and from learning station."
(ii) "I expect to access study materials in a nearby internet café or use a modem at home since I live in an urban area and I possess a laptop. I have an average income [thus] I can afford the cost," (iii) "I expect to incur lower tuition fees as compared to on campus studies," (iv) "It reduces the necessary costs such as traveling cost, hostel costs," (v) "the cost for photocopying will be greatly reduced," and (v) "I expect to waste less time and energy in searching for lecturers or supervisors."

Reducer of Stress: Respondents have considered reduction of stress as a possibility if and when online learning is employed. They expressed that the stress they experience when using printed study materials for ODL constitutes one of the stumbling blocks in their pursuit for timely completion of programmes. They observed that stress will be reduced because online learning enables access to study materials through websites which can easily be visited at learner's convenient time and place. Some of the expressions that reflect this respondents' perception were presented as follows:

- "When using printed materials for our courses we occasionally miss the materials at the beginning of the course, we are then obliged to make photocopies of the printed materials from friends who completed similar programmes in past academic years. This is stressful."
- "With online learning, the stress and cost we incur with photocopying will be reduced. We'll use online materials."
- [online learning] "will reduce the stress we get as we struggle to make photocopies of existing but very faint study materials."

Enhancer of Speedy Completion of Programmes: The following were two of three responses making reference to perceptions of online learning as enabler for students' speedy completion of studies.

(i) "If I study through online, I expect to finish my studies in a short time because it [online programme] will be well programmed."
(ii) "There will be no waste of time; we shall receive study materials in good time."

A Platform of Collaborative Learning and Exchange of Ideas

Respondents also viewed online learning as a platform of collaborative learning and exchange of ideas. Respondents had the following ideas in relation to this type of perception.

- [Online learning will enable me "to be able to exchange ideas including skills and knowledge with students and academics in other participating institutions."

- "It will enhance learning by simplifying interaction with tutors online" … "it will also assist in giving access to multiple ideas from many people rather than depending on ideas from only one person [the teacher]"
- [Online learning} will give us the ability to share and learn from others including acquisition of new ideas and skills.
- It [online learning] will provide a platform for collaborative learning." "It is more global."

Provider of flexibility

Respondents further perceived online learning as provider of flexibility in terms of time, and place some of the expressions exposes their perceptions leading to the position they take. (i) "Online learning will provide me with the ability to learn anywhere and anytime. " [I] you just have to log in." "I will study at my own pace." Although the potential learners have expectations of flexibility, practice of online learning demonstrate situations where such flexibility is interfered with particularly when synchronous online sessions are organized. It is such cases which make sensitization orientation programmes imperative. Learners need to be informed that there are some cases when they will be obliged to lose some of the time flexibility as they engage in timed synchronous activities which may include organized assignments with experts through discussion forum or online chart-rooms.

Empowerment Agent: Interviewers also perceived online learning as an avenue from which they can be empowered as they improve their technology skills and search relevant materials and become innovative as they come across innovative ideas and good practices reports. Some of the respondents considered online learning as empowerment. The flowing are some of their responses leading to this proposition.

> (i)" [Online learning will give] me the ability to search for relevant materials and information online" (ii) "It will iron out the limitations of lack of materials." (iii) "I will be exposed to learn different types of knowledge or widen my scope as far as online learning is concerned." (iv) "It will ignite my curiosity for innovation since it will expose me to ideas that I could not have been able to obtain through other means." (iv) "[Online learning expands the chance of attaining set goals because it is calculated in a systematic manner to attain desired goals."

ONLINE LEARNING: A CHALLENGE

Respondents perceived online learning as a challenge in different ways, including the following clusters of challenges that were constituted after analyzing the content and implications of the responses in relation to online practices and real practical or lived situations:

Extending Social Classifications
- "It [online learning] has an element of biasness because it can only be accessed by those who have the knowledge and skills of computers."
- "It discourages others from joining study programmes because of the high costs involved."
- "Due to [electricity] power infrastructure not being accessed by people who live in rural areas it will separate those in urban who have online infrastructure and those in rural areas who do not have such infrastructure."

This category of challenges can be easily comprehended if readers consider the long debate regarding the digital divide. The digital divide has been examined on grounds of gender, rural versa vis urban populations, high and low social economic status, normardis versa vis sedentary populations, etc.

Disrupting Family Life and Learners' Health
Of interest was the fact that three of the potential learners feared that if they get engaged in online learning their family and health will be interfered. They also stated their concern that excessive exposure to the computer could cause neck strain and back ache. Others considered that online learning will interfere with family matters, explaining that they will be studying at home and that they live in small apartments without enough space to separate them and other members of their family while studying. Therefore engaging in online learning will cause inconveniences at family level.

Increasing Cost of life
This phenomenon was expressed through a variety of ways including among others:
- "Majority of learners cannot afford to pay fees and buy the equipment needed for studying on line"
- "It is expensive in terms of buying internet broadband for internet connectivity"
- "Equipment is also expensive and many Tanzanians cannot afford"
- "Time spent online searching for and reading online materials cost a lot of money"

Other challenges emerging from the findings include online considered as a challenge to the government since the governments is expected to ensure that appropriate online infrastructure, relevant policies and resources are put in place to allow successful online learning programmes to take off, survive and be sustainable.

Online Learning: A Challenge to the Government and other Stake Holders
Among the findings of this study was that online learning practice remains a challenge for the government and other online learning stake holders. The potential learners responses showed there are many online provisions that the government and other stakeholders are responsible to provide but these agencies have not been able to offer and as a consequence online has not been adapted following positive development trends that are sweeping the world. Respondents" statements that led to identification of this perception were among others:
- "Power cuts … eeh! … *unreliable power* (power cuts is common in my area)"
- *"Lack of electricity*; for countries like Tanzania, electricity is not reliable and I am living in Tanzania …"
- "Fear of lack of electrical power to operate the computer or internet"
- "Shortage of electricity… power cuts will limit online learning"
- "Lack of power/electricity to operate the computer or internet especially *in rural areas*."
- "Limited availability of *internet cafes"*
- *"Lack of online facilities like computers* as far as online learning programmes are concerned."
- "Unreliable *internet connections*, both at service provider and computer set levels."
- "Online learning has *not been adequately propagated*, may be its just that we have been … If only we could emphasize on the strength of online learning we could have already been seng its importance"
- *"Limited awareness*, *mind set*, ICT as *new innovations* in education, and *cost implications*."
- "It would have been easy to introduce it because we would have gotten computers, we would have developed appropriate *policies and guidelines* for implementation of online learning! The guidelines and policies would have encouraged us or rather they would

have forced us to adopt online learning because adoption would have been made a *law and the law* would have been enforced."

Online Learning: A Challenge to Academicians and Researchers
Academicians and researchers were implicated in the findings of this study in the sense that some of the statements had explicit or implicit meanings targeting these two groups of practitioners/ professionals. Statements that testify this position include the following responses:
(i)   "Limited knowledge and skills in using computer and other electronic devices"
(ii) "The use of sophisticated technology may be difficult to others"
(iii) "Technologies like chat rooms, teleconferences, are new to some and may need to take computer skills prior to their learning; It is limited it needs knowledgeable persons," "lack of skills in delivering content through the web; or creating materials for online learning." "Trained personnel to create effective management of online learning and development of soft ware for that effect;" "Online learning needs wide knowledge of … needs conversant people who use electronic media," "teachers need to be encouraged to be confident in online teaching"

Analysis of the responses in the preceding indicate that if academics were aggressive enough they would use on the age technologies as well they would educate the public, the government and ODL stakeholders to embrace and use online learning so as to harness its benefits. On the same line researchers would be in a position to conduct relevant research in along the online learning areas so that they can provide evidence-based advice to decision makers in the education system so that they make appropriate decisions regarding online learning.

CONCLUSION
Online learning was identified by all respondents as potential for development given its potency for improving quality and expanding outreach for education provision. The potentials for online line learning have been explored in its impact on curricula pedagogy, context and content as highlighted through the brief review of literature and the research findings. However, as can be deduced from the findings and the brief discussions, attainment of this goal has been slowed down by factors most of which ensue from the low social economic status of majority of populations Tanzania. According to the researcher, In order for online learning to be able to change the dominant state of poverty; changes need to start by changing teaching and learning approaches (pedagogy) in line with critical, creative and reflective approaches. There is need to abandon the dominant teacher-centered pedagogies and to adopt learner-centered pedagogy. The shift demands that instructors and learners be exposed to critical, creative and reflective pedagogies. The critical pedagogy encourages teachers/facilitators to develop critical skills enabling learners to go beyond the mundane or common sense naïve acceptance of the knowledge, skills and values they access or develop through online provisions. Criticality enables facilitators and learners to sift and adapt knowledge, skills and values in terms of contextual appropriateness focusing on relevance and meaningfulness to freedom of self and others. Exposure and competencies in creative pedagogy on the other hand guide facilitators to orient learners to create their own content, context, and pedagogy out of the experiences they attain from the wealth of knowledge, skills and values accessed through online learning. These are attainable since online enabled communities of learning fairly collaborate and share what they develop together as members of free learning communities.

The possibilities for the suggestions above are conceivable on the basis of the efficacy of online learning as perceived from the research respondents' responses of online learning as an opportunity as well as a challenge posed for the government, academics, researchers and other online learning stakeholders. If these target groups of identified agencies become aggressive enough prerequisite preparations could be made to develop potential online learning learners' awareness as preparation to attract them into the system. Additionally, adequate and appropriate infrastructure, mind set for stake holders and financing systems for initiating and sustaining online learning would be put in place.

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