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Adoption of Social Networking Technology in Teaching and Learning Process in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract

Increase is the effectiveness of teaching and learning through the adoption of social networking technology in the teaching and learning process in Nigeria tertiary institutions, using Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike as case study, is one of the landmark achievements of information and communication technology and as innovative pedagogy aimed at redefining education. The study employed a survey research method and was aimed at finding out how advantageous and important adoption of social networking is to teaching and learning in Nigeria Universities, and the factors militating against this adoption. The instrument used for the study was structured questionnaires, and the instrument was validated by five scholars from the Federal University of Technology Owerri. A response rate of 80% was recorded. The responses from questionnaires were anlaysed using frequency distribution and parentages. The results from the study revealed that majority of the respondents gave positive response and agreed that adoption of social networking in teaching and learning in Nigeria Universities is important and advantageous and will

ensure a closer link between lecturers and students and will help bridge the divide between the students and the lecturers. Use of social Networking media in teaching would also help sharpen the students' skills in publication. Some top most militating factors against this adoption include epileptic power supply, high tariff on internet access and unwilling of lecturers to adopt changes. Some recommendations made were suggestions for improvement in power supply and other basic infrastructures by the government, improvement of technical know-how of both students and lecturers and increase in interest on this adoption and use.

Introduction

The world is developing at an accelerated speed and one of the vehicles driving this development is information and communication technology. Information and communication technology affects every sphere of human endeavour ranging from health to education, engineering, science and technology, entertainment, amongst others. Social networking is one if the offshoots of technological advancements in information and communication technology and has affected the way we now live, work, learn, and relate with one another. In the Nigerian Educational landscape both the lecturers and the students, in this present time, have all access to electronic, telecommunication and information and communication enabled devices. The availability, accessibility, and frequency of use of laptops, desktops, palm held devices, tablets, telephones and other devices have increased over the last ten years in Nigeria. Telecommunication companies have tremendously boosted internet connectivity and access as it is observed that 2G and even 3G browsing networks are available even in remotest communities in Nigeria. To a large extent the National Communication Commission, the regulating agency that coordinates and governs operations of telecommunication companies in Nigeria have in recent years ensured that these companies provide adequate services to the consuming public and have also maintained strict sanctions on companies who hike their service charges unnecessarily and those who reap customers off without providing the required services. To this ends therefore, it is observed that quite a lot of the consuming public can now enjoy internet access. Consequently, with access to the internet, users can subscribe to and enjoy the numerous advantages social networking sites have to offer especially its educational implications.

What Is Social Networking?

Social networking is the grouping of individuals into specific groups, like small rural communities or a neighborhood subdivision. A social network is a social structure made up of a set of social actors (such as individuals or organizations) and a set of dyadic ties between these actors. The social network perspective provides a set of methods for analyzing the structure of whole social entities as well as a variety of theories explaining the patterns observed in these structures. The study of these

structures uses social network analysis to identify local and global patterns, locate influential entities, and examine network dynamics. Social network is a theoretical construct useful in the social sciences to study relationships between individuals, groups, organizations, or even entire societies. The term is used to describe a social structure determined by such interactions. The ties through which any given social unit connects represent the networking is possible in person, especially in the workplace, universities, and schools convergence of the various social contacts of that unit. This theoretical approach is, necessarily, relational.

An axiom of the social network approach to understanding social interaction is that social phenomena should be primarily conceived and investigated through the properties of relations between and within units, instead of the properties of these units themselves. Thus, one common criticism of social network theory is that individual agency is often ignored although this may not be the case in practice.

Although social, it is most popular online, over the internet. This is because unlike most schools, colleges, or workplaces, the internet is filled with millions of individuals who are looking to meet other people, to gather and share first-hand information and experiences about cooking, golfing, gardening, developing friendships professional alliances, finding employment, business-to-business marketing and even groups sharing information about relatively any discipline and human endeavour. The topics and interests are as varied and rich as the story of our universe.

When it comes to online social networking, websites are commonly used. These websites are known as social sites. Social networking websites function like an online community of internet users. Depending on the website in question, many of these online community members share common interests in hobbies, religion, politics and alternative lifestyles. Once you are granted access to a social networking website you can begin to socialize. This socialization may include reading the profile pages of other members and possibly even contacting them and sharing information with them. Social networking often involves grouping specific individuals or organizations together. While there are a number of social networking websites that focus on particular interests, there are others that do not. The websites without a main focus are often referred to as traditional" social networking websites and usually have open memberships. This means that anyone can become a member, no matter what their hobbies, beliefs, or views are. However, once you are inside this online community, you can begin to create your own network of friends and eliminate members that do not share common interests or goals. The friends that you can make are just one of the many benefits to social networking online. Another one of those benefits includes diversity because the internet gives individuals from all around the world access to social networking sites. This means that although you are in the United States, you could develop an online friendship with someone in Denmark or

India. Not only will you make new friends, but you just might learn a thing or two about new cultures or new languages and learning is always a good thing.

Categories of Social Networks

According to White (2006), there are seven major social network categories. These include:

1. Social connections: these are social networks that enables its users keep in touch with friends and family members, examples include;

   (a) Facebook- Facebook provides a way for users to build connections and share information with people and organizations they choose to interact with online. b. Twitter - Twitter helps its users share thoughts and keep up with others via real-time information network.

   (b) Google + - This is designed to allow users to build circles of contacts that they are able to interact with and that is integrated with other Google products.

2. Multimedia Sharing: Social networking makes it easy to share video and photography content online. Some examples of multimedia social networks include; a. YouTube: This is the Social media platform that allows users to share and view video content.

   (a) Flickr: This site provides a powerful option for managing digital photographs online, as well as for sharing them with others.

   (b) Picasa: Similar to Flickr, Picasa provides a way to organize and share photos. It is a Google product and so offers integrated tagging and sharing with Google+.

3. Professional: Professional social networks are designed to provide opportunities for career-related growth. Some of these types of networks provide a general forum for professionals to connect, while others are focused on specific occupations or interests. A few examples of professional social networks are listed below.

   (a) Linkedin: Linked In has more than 135 million members, making it the largest online professional network. Participants have an opportunity to build relationships by making connections and joining relevant groups.

   (b) Classroom 2.0: Social network specifically designed to help teachers connect, share and help each other with profession-specific matters.

   (c) Nurse Connect: Online community designed to help individuals in the nursing profession connect and communicate with each other.

4. Informational: Informational communities are made up of people seeking answers to everyday problems. For example, when you are thinking about starting a home improvement project or want to learn how to go green at home, you may perform a web search and discover countless blogs, websites, and forums filled with people who are looking for the same kind of information. A few examples include:

   (a) Super Green Me: Online community where individuals interested in adopting green living practices can interact.

   (b) Do-It-Yourself Community: Social media resource to allow do-it-yourself enthusiasts to interact with each other.

5. Educational: Educational networks are where many students go in order to collaborate with other students on academic projects, to conduct research for school, or to interact with professors and teachers via blogs and classroom forums. Educational social networks are becoming extremely popular within the educational system today. Some examples of such educational social networks are listed below. a. The Math Forum: A large educational network designed to connect students with an interest in math, this site provides interaction opportunities for students by age group.

   (a) ePALS School Blog: This international social network students is designed to build international connections to promote world peace.

6. Hobbies: One of the most popular reasons many people use the Internet is to conduct research on their favourite projects or topics of interest related to personal hobbies. When people find a website based on their favourite hobby, they discover a whole community of people from around the world who share the same passion for those interests. This is what lies at the heart of what makes social networks work, and this is why social networks that are focused on hobbies are some of the most popular. A few examples of hobby-focused social networking sites include:

   (a) Oh My Bloom: Social media site specifically for gardening enthusiasts. It features groups, forums, blogs, video content and more.

   (b) My Place at Scrapbook.com: Designed specifically for scrapbooking enthusiasts, users can create profiles, share information, post updates and more.

   (c) Sport Shouting: An online destination for sports fans to voice their opinions and connect with other enthusiasts.

7. Academic: Academic researchers who want to share their research and review results achieved by colleagues may find academic-specific social networking to be quite valuable. A few of the most popular online communities for academics are:

   (a) Academia.edu: Users of this academic social network can share their own research, as well as follow research submitted by others.

   (b) Connotea Collaborative Research: Online resource for scientists, researchers and clinical practitioners to find, organize and share useful information.

8. Video Conferencing: Video conferencing social networks exist and this helps its users make real time video calls from any remote location irrespective of their geographical location. The most popular of video conferencing social networks include

   (a) Skype.

   (b) Tango.

   (c) Oovoo.

Effects of Social Networking on Students

Social networking communities are here to stay. Facebook has over 500 million users, while Twitter has over 200 million. That's not even counting blogs or YouTube video blogs. There's no doubt that students are actively engaged in online communities, but what kind of effects are these sites having on education is the question that comes to mind. Social networks have presented both negative and positive effects and only a balance in adoption and usage will ensure that only the positive effects are enjoyed by both students and teachers alike.

The Positive effects:

(1) Social networking has increased the rate and quality of collaboration for students. They are better able to communicate meeting times or share information quickly, which can increase productivity and help them learn how to work well in groups.

(2) Social networking teaches students skills they'll need to survive in the business world. Being able to create and maintain connections to many people in many industries is an integral part of developing a career or building a business.

(3) By spending so much time working with new technologies, students develop more familiarity with computers and other electronic devices. With the

increased focus on technology in education and business, this will help students build skills that will aid them throughout their lives.

(4) The ease with which a student can customize their profile makes them more aware of basic aspects of design and layout that are not often taught in schools. Building resumes and personal websites, which are increasingly used as online portfolios, benefit greatly from the skills obtained by customizing the layout and designs of social networking profiles.

(5) The ease and speed with which users can upload pictures, videos or stories has resulted in a greater amount of sharing of creative works. Being able to get instant feedback from friends and family on their creative outlets helps students refine and develop their artistic abilities and can provide much needed confidence or help them decide what career path they may want to pursue.

The Negative effects:

(1) Many students rely on the accessibility of information on social media specifically and the web in general to provide answers. That means a reduced focus on learning and retaining information.

(2) Students who attempt to multi-task, checking social media sites while studying, show reduced academic performance. Their ability to concentrate on the task at hand is significantly reduced by the distractions that are brought about by surfing on these social networking sites.

(3) The more time students spend on social sites, the less time they spend socializing in person. Because of the lack of body signals and other nonverbal cues, like tone and inflection, social networking sites are not an adequate replacement for face-to- face communication. Students who spend a great deal of time on social networking are less able to effectively communicate in person.

(4) The popularity of social media, and the speed at which information is published, has created a lax attitude towards proper spelling and grammar. This reduces a student's ability to effectively write without relying on a computer's spell check feature.

(5) The degree to which private information is available online and the anonymity the internet seems to provide has made students forget the need to filter the information they post. Many colleges and potential employers investigate an applicant's social networking profiles before granting acceptance or interviews. Most students don't constantly evaluate the content

they're publishing online, which can bring about negative consequences months or years down the road.

How Can Social Networking Sites Help Lecturers and Teachers Do Their Jobs Effectively?

Social media use has expanded to include even the world's academic circles. Teachers, Lecturers, and professors are suddenly using social media, mainly to connect with colleagues, to access news and appear in the buzz around it. It is common site nowadays to see the academia post tweets about research in progress, advertise conferences and seminars, call for papers for publication and even announce research results and academic break-through. However, what many don't appreciate about social media is the fact that it can be used within a classroom situation to create more value to learning. The section below gives an insight on how professors, lecturers and teachers can use social media to improve their work and students' academic performance and success.

1.　Help them create blogs

Lecturers should encourage and Help their students create great blogs where they share ideas and perspectives. There are many online platforms where students could create their blogs. Lecturers should Mentor their students on the need to publish real authentic and original content to ensure that they become a strong voice in their chosen field and discipline. Encouraging them to start early to develop interest in publishing would help them as the climb the academic ladder and face bigger challenges in life. You may be surprised at the interest some of them create, eventually. Plagiarism checker known as "Plagtracker" is an online tool students could use to remove plagiarism in their content for more authenticity and online authority.

2.　Lecturers should create virtual offices

It is common knowledge that for varying reasons, not many students love to come to their lecturers' offices for consultation or advice. In most cases, students are scared or feel intimidated by their lecturers. Moreover, lecturers are busy people who have a lot to deal with in as far as work is concerned. This may end up limiting their ability to interact one on one with students, a feat that could be costly later on. With social media, students have access to their professor, wherever they are. As a professor, you can use social media platforms to create more hours for your students without having to seem serious, as is the norm.

3.　Create Facebook Pages for your class

Facebook is the world's largest social media platforms out there and if things were as they are, it's here to stay. If you want to create better interactions with your students,

provide updates on class status and make announcements, a Facebook page is the best platform to do it. The advantage of creating a Facebook page for your class is that, you can tap new students into it whenever they fan or like the page. Using the page to spark more student interaction with your course will enable you make huge stride as far as the learning objectives are concerned.

4. Teach them to network

Social media has become the backbone of communication of today. As a teacher, you need to care about your students interactions and whether or not they achieve their career goals later. With the immense networking benefits and opportunities that come with social media, you should be on the forefront of helping them network through it. Moreover, if you create networks in the field, you could use social media to make connections between them and industry leaders who know you. This will not only boost their mentorship opportunities, but it can also help them secure elusive employment in today's tough economy.

Research questions

The study sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. How often are social networking media used in teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities?

2. How important is the adoption of social networking to teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities?

3. What are the advantages of adopting social networking in teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities?

4. What factors limit the adoption of social networking to teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities?

Research Design

The study employed a survey research method. It was aimed at finding out how advantageous and important adoption of social networking is to teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities, and what factors militate against this adoption.

Population/Sample Size

The population of the study consisted of students and lecturers of the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike. However students and lecturers in the college of natural and applied sciences were purposively selected as the sampled population. Hence a total of 100 questionnaires were distributed, 60 to randomly selected students and 40 to randomly selected lecturers all in the above mentioned college of the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike. However a total

of 80 questionnaires were returned 50 from the students and 30 from the lecturers, giving a response rate of 80 percent.

Data Collection and Analysis

The instrument used for data collection was questionnaires. This provided the primary data source. Secondary data was collected from interviews, personal discussions/interactions, and literature. A four point modified Likert scale was used in rating the responses from the questionnaire respondents.

The instrument was validated by scholars from the Federal University of Technology Owerri. Descriptive statistics, frequency distribution and. Percentages were used to analyze and describe the data collected. Owing to the fact that the lecturers and students belonged to different age, social, economic, and academic classes, responses from the questionnaires was analyzed separately for students and lecturers, irrespective of the fact that the same questions were administered to both the lecturers and the students.

Results and Discussions

Results from the questionnaires were presented and discussed below:

1. Social networking media are often used in teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities.

Table 1.1: responses from the lecturers (n=30)

	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	-	-
Agree	-	-
Disagree	5	16.67
Strongly disagree	25	83.33
Total	30	100

Table1.2: responses from the students (n=50)

	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	-	-
Agree	-	-
Disagree	10	20
Strongly disagree	40	80
Total	50	100

Table 1.1 above, shows that 5 out of the 30 sampled lecturers disagreed, while 25 strongly disagreed that social networking media was often used in teaching and learning in Nigerian universities, representing 16.67% and 83.33% respectively of the sampled population. Table 1.2 revealed that of the 50 students randomly selected, 10 of the students representing 20%, of the sampled student size disagreed while the reaming 40 representing a huge 80% of the sampled student population strongly disagree that social networking media was not often used in teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities. The results from these two tables 1.1 and 1.2 above strongly indicate that social networking media are not often used in teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities.

2. The adoption of social networking to teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities is very important

Table 2.1 responses from the lecturers (n=30)

	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	20	66.67
Agree	10	33.33
Disagree	-	-
Strongly disagree	-	-
Total	50	100

Table 2.2: responses from the students (n=50)

	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	35	70
Agree	15	30
Disagree	-	-
Strongly disagree		
Total	50	100

Table 2.1 above displays frequencies and percentages of the sampled lecturers and from this table we observed that 20 (66.67%) of the lecturers strongly agree that adoption of social networking media in teaching and learning in Nigerian universities was important, however, 10 of the respondents representing 33.33% agree that this adoption was important. Table 2.2 revealed that 35 out of the 50 students, representing 70% of the student sampled population strongly agreed, while 15 (30%) of the sampled population agreed that adoption of social networking in teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities was important. The findings from these tables 2.1 and 2.2 above, however answer the second research question by

revealing that adoption of social networking media in teaching and learning in Nigerian universities was important.

3. Adopting social networking in teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities is advantageous.

Table 3.1 responses from the lecturers (n=30)

	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	22	73.33
Agree	8	26.67
Disagree	-	-
Strongly disagree	-	-
Total	50	100

Table 3.2 responses from the students (n=50)

	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	45	90
Agree	5	10
Disagree	-	-
Strongly disagree	-	-
Total	50	100

Table 3.1 shows that 22 out of the 30 sampled lecturers strongly agreed that adopting social networking technologies in teaching and learning in Nigerian universities was advantageous; this number represented 73.33% of the sample size. However, 8 (26.67%) of the respondents agreed that this adoption was advantageous.

The researchers however conducted interview sessions on both lecturers and students and the results of the interview revealed that both students and lecturers agreed that adoption of social networking media in teaching and learning in Nigerian universities were very advantageous. Some of the advantages listed out were prompt,

speedy and wider spread of information dissemination between lecturers and their students, quicker access to information, accelerated knowledge sharing, and improved socialization skills. The students pointed out that if their lecturers adopted the use of these social networking media, it will make it easier for them to relate with them irrespective of time and geographical location.

These findings from the tables above therefore, provides answers to the third research question, that adoption of social networking media in teaching and learning were advantageous in the Nigerian university system.

4. What factors limit the adoption of social networking to teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities?

Table 4.1 responses from the lecturers (n=30)

Factors	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Lack of basic infrastructures	30	100
Lack of technical know-how	28	93.33
Unwillingness to accept change	10	33.33
High cost of support structures	25	83.33
Lack of interest	15	50
Total	50	100

Table 4.2 responses from the students (n=50)

Factors	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Lack of basic infrastructures	40	80
Lack of technical know-how	10	20
Unwillingness to accept change	30	60
Lack of interest	5	10
Total	50	100

Table 4.1 and 4.2 above revealed that topmost on the list of factors militating against the adoption of social networking media in teaching and learning in Nigerian universities were, lack of basic infrastructures, high cost of support structures, and unwillingness to accept changes. However lack of interest and lack of technical know-how were also among the factors that militated against the adoption of social networking media in teaching and learning in Nigerian universities.

Limitations of the Study

As with most research, the results of this study must be interpreted within the constraints of the study's limitations. The researchers are not aware of any reason to suspect that there would be alterations in the results if a different sample population is used for the study. However, difference in demographics might introduce these differences.

Recommendations

1. University lecturers are encouraged to incorporate social networking media in teaching as this will make it easier for them to do their jobs of impacting knowledge to their students.

2. Students should make positive use of social networking media to enable them share information faster amongst themselves.

3. The government should regulate network providers so that there will be a reduction in factors limiting effective adoption and use of social networking media in teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities.

4. Improvement in power supply and other basic infrastructures should be championed by the government as this will encourage this adoption process.

5. Lecturers and students should improve their knowledge of use of these social networking media as well as increase their interest too on their adoption and use.

Conclusion

Technological advancements and digitalization of all aspects of human existence has necessitated the inclusion of information and communication technology in most of, if not all of what we do in this present computer age. Landmark achievements of research in information and communication technology have given rise to among others the internet. With the use of the internet, tasks that were hitherto seen as Herculean have become easier and could now be accomplished within the shortest run-time. Social networking media are applications that run on the internet and they have revolutionalized the way we live, work, socialize and even the way we learn. It is observed from this research that adoption of social networking

media in teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities is not only important but also advantageous, and will ensure a closer link between lecturers and students and hence bridge the gap of communication breakdown between them. Social networking media if adopted in teaching and learning will also enable the students sharpen their publication skills and aid lecturers get updated on their various disciplines as quickly as possible. However, some factors like epileptic power supply in the country, high tariff on internet access, and poor network among others, militate against effective adoption of social networking media in teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities.

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