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E-LEARNING READINESS OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES AMID COVID-19 ERA

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Abstract

Purpose*: This article is a discourse on eLearning readiness amid COVID-19 pandemic era focusing on Nigerian universities. The main aim is to chronicle the development of eLearning globally, the recent surge in its adoption as occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic and put the Nigerian universities' current eLearning status into proper perspectives based on existing literature.*

Design/Methodology/Approach*: The approach is exploratory. The author reviewed existing relevant literature in line with the articles' outline which includes definitions of e-learning; benefits of eLearning; COVID-19 and eLearning option: trends and analysis; response of educators and eLearning firms to COVID-19; eLearning and the future of education; the challenges of eLearning, and eLearning and e-readiness of Nigerian universities. The selected articles were synthesised and fluidly discussed to elucidate the perception of eLearning readiness globally and locally.*

Findings*: The review showed that eLearning has and is still gaining widespread acceptance both in the past and in the present. E-Learning has metamorphosed to becoming an educational model itself and it is being touted to be the future of educational delivery. The COVID-19 pandemic is greeted with upsurge in the adoption of eLearning alternative as institutions irrespective of geographical location, either in the developed or developing nations, struggles to keep school running. It was revealed in the article that Nigerian universities are not strategically prepared and not ready to wholesomely adopt eLearning option due to various issues bothering on institutional and national hindrances as well as students' eLearning infrastructural deficiencies such as lack of personal computers and low internet access.*

Practical Implication*: There is indication that Nigerian universities may lag in the comity of universities globally as par 21st century instructional delivery strategies if the current trend persists. It is encouraged that all Nigerian universities should strive to explore the full benefits offered by eLearning in order to maintain its relevance globally.*

Originality/Value*: The article is regarding eLearning readiness among Nigerian universities. There seems to be dearth of empirical studies in this research area. It is recommended that more empirical studies be conducted to close the research gaps.*

Keywords: *ELearning readiness, COVID-19 pandemic, Nigerian universities, education.*

Paper type: *Opinion*

Introduction

The process of educating is metamorphosing and one of the greatest impetus is the impact of information and communication technology right from the 19th century when the first set of technologies were introduced. According to Kennah (2016), the usefulness of ICT in influencing instructional strategy in schools is traceable to the early 19th century when Skinner, an American psychologist and a behaviourist, viewed that the development of educational media resources have profoundly influenced learning.

Right from the 19th century, the usage of chalkboard, pencils and pen has proven as the reliable and most popular mode of teaching and learning (Cuban, 2001). However, the automation procedures that cut across all sphere of human endeavours has changed the way educational routines, including teaching and learning process are carried out. Globally, education has been greatly influenced by the

incursion of ICT such that instructional process which was hitherto face-to-face has transformed to digital leaning, online learning, electronic learning, computer aided learning and etcetera.

Prominent in the field of education in this century is eLearning, which literally means 'electronic learning'. It is a learning process that is aided by electronic devices. This is the type of learning where the teaching, learning, test, measurement and evaluation are heavily influenced by the use of electronic devices such as the personal computers (PCs), course management systems, social media platforms and etcetera to facilitate teaching and learning. The process involves the manipulation of hardware (computers, magnetic boards, projectors, public address systems etcetera) and software (course management systems and other online educational applications) by teachers (humanware) for the purpose of teaching and learning (Noble, 2017).

Multiple use of computers in teaching including the use of PowerPoint presentations in the presentation of teaching, seminars, workshops, and other educational platforms, backing up files, and word processing programmes, are examples that have boosted teachers' confidence and serves as the benefits of the practical use of eLearning platforms in schools. Nevertheless, it has been observed that despite the enormous benefits of eLearning in facilitating the way teaching and learning are carried out in this century, the problem educators are facing with integrating ICT (eLearning) in their classroom are numerous (Ornstein, Levine, Gutek, and Vocke, 2016).

Some of such problems as explained by Agyei and Voogt (2015) bothers on software issues judging by the fact that such software is not originally developed by the teachers. The authors argued that most of the software applications being used in schools such as databases, spreadsheets and word processing software were created for business purposes and not for education. Also, some video sharing platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and etcetera which are now being heavily depended upon for educational use were not originally created for educational purposes. Though, many teachers started utilising these softwares in teaching, initially they were not meant for this purpose and so it remains difficult for teachers to use these softwares in the teaching and learning process appropriately (Agyei & Voogt, 2015). Another issue bothering the mind is that many teachers are not competent in using these softwares since the main aim of creation was not for teaching and learning purposes (Cuban, 2001).

Be that as it may, the COVID-19 pandemic has opened a new thinking in the way Academia now tackles instructional delivery and other teaching and learning activities particularly when the pandemic has forced many students across the globe out of school. A very popular agitation in the lips of all stakeholders (including institutions, educators, parents and even students) is the option of eLearning. The assumption is that eLearning platform will serve as a surrogate to the hitherto traditional teaching and learning process particularly for the period of the raging COVID-19 pandemic (Dhawan, 2020).

It is against this background that this paper espouses the concept of eLearning as it is being touted as a replacement for physical teaching and learning process particularly in this era of COVID-19 pandemic which is characterized by social and physical distancing. The content of the paper comprises the definitions of e-learning; benefits of eLearning; COVID-19 and eLearning option: trends and analysis; response of educators and eLearning firms to COVID-19; eLearning and the future of education; the challenges of eLearning, eLearning and e-readiness of Nigerian universities; and summary and conclusion.

What is eLearning?

ELearning has been defined by many scholars based on their understandings and the era in which they operated. In the 1990s, where the concept of eLearning was first echoed (Friesen,2009), not only did different concepts such as computer-based training, technology-based training, or computer based learning, were attributed to e-learning, but the term was not as aptly defined due to the nebulosity of several issues of consideration. According to Fry (2001), eLearning in the 90s referred to tools

used in delivering education, training and collaboration relying on various electronic media but, principally, the Internet, whose tools have constituted the main driver of eLearning.

Hiltz (1990) sees eLearning as the enhancement of learning by technology which he termed as technology enhanced learning (TEL) with the main goal of providing socio-technical innovations and also improving cost effectiveness and efficiency for teaching and learning activities, regarding individuals and organizations and are independent of pace, time, and place. Thus, the author posited that eLearning is applicable to the support of any teaching and learning practices using technology. This definition was complemented by Harasim, Hiltz, Teles, and Turoff (1995) when the authors see eLearning as basically the computer and network supported knowledge and skills transfer. The authors stated that e-Learning denotes the usage of electronic processes and applications include computer-based learning, Web-based learning, virtual classrooms and digital collaboration. Content is delivered via intranet/extranet, the Internet, the video or audio tape, the satellite TV, and the CD-ROM to learn. eLearning in the 90s is used by educational institutions to enhance and support the class room teaching and offer courses to a larger population of learners globally. It can be self-paced (asynchronous) or instructor led (synchronous) and includes media in the form of audio, video, streaming, animation, image, and text.

However, in the millennium, there was paradigm shift in the way eLearning is perceived. Unlike in the 1990s when it is seen as basically an information technology driven instructional strategy, eLearning transformed to becoming a model of learning itself. Authors such as Herani (2010) founded eLearning models on its ability to serve as panacea to the issues surrounding teaching and learning in the traditional setting. Such issues bothering on the exploding number of learners, inadequate classroom space, lacking in the number of tutors and facilitators, shortage in the number of resources and others. Therefore, the definitions of eLearning transformed from merely revolving round information and communication technologies to becoming models of aiding the ever changing educational business.

Succinctly, Obringer (2001) posited that eLearning transformed from being an ordinary computer aided learning platform for taking online classes to becoming models which are aided by tools that go beyond computers to include MP3 players, podcasts, blogs and more. The author advanced that the millennium brought about the nomenclature of 'Net generation students' who are well versed in technology, adept at communicating by text messaging, e-mailing and chatting groups and armed with laptops, MP3 players, smartphones and PDAs. Before being admitted into higher colleges, many of these students have gained lots of experiences using online social networks, downloading music and video as well as blogging. These students look forward to applying their technological skills to learning, while institutions are deploying ways to meet those needs with online courses and hybrids that bring new technology to traditional teaching.

In this current dispensation, Sudarsana, Armaeni, Sudrajat, Abdullah, Satria, Saddhono, Setyawasih, Meldra, and Ekalestari. (2019) stated that eLearning can refer to any web-based education driven by web technology. This definition includes any type of web app that is based on web technology to run and is useful for an educational process. Educators have characterized eLearning as the technology-driven instructional process which offers speed, unlimited place, and time to access information that enable teaching and learning activities to be carried out easily by teachers and students anytime and anywhere. The boundaries of space, distance and time are no longer complex problems to solve. The way to learn through the web is that there is access to information sources via the Internet. Furthermore, there is information about the location of the source of information to retrieve. As long as the computer between one another is connected to each other on the Internet, it can be accessed from anywhere. This is one of the advantages of eLearning through the Internet. However, one of the obvious transformation in the perception of eLearning in this era is the realization that eLearning is not only putting learning resources on the web and then accessing it through a web

computer, but also include general purpose usage and not only as an alternative media for paper to store various documentation or information.

In summary, eLearning is a system that is based on formalised teaching but with the help of electronic resources. Therefore, in the eLearning environment, teaching can be based within or without of the classrooms, the use of the Internet and computers form the major component of eLearning. ELearning can also be termed as a network enabled transfer of skills and knowledge, and the delivery of education is made to a large number of recipients at the same or different times. Earlier, it was not accepted wholeheartedly as it was assumed that this system lacked the human element required in learning.

Nonetheless, with the rapid progress in technology and the advancement in learning systems, it is now embraced by the masses. The introduction of computers was the basis of this revolution and with the passage of time, as we get hooked to smartphones, tablets, etc, these devices now have an important place in the classrooms for learning. Books are gradually getting replaced by electronic educational materials like optical discs or pen drives. Knowledge can also be shared via the Internet, which is accessible 24/7, anywhere, anytime.

Benefits of eLearning in the 21st century

The 21st century is characterised by several innovations aided by information technology advances. One of the very prominent of all is globalisation which heralded global communication. The whole word is now a global village where happenings in New York can easily be viewed and heard in Ibadan due to the availability of advanced telecommunication devices. This happening surely shows a turnaround in the way people communicate and how knowledge is transferred. Palloff and Prat (2000) stated that globalisation equally affected the world of education. Prior to the era of globalisation, Education is becoming costly while the demand to increase the knowledge of graduates and improve quality, as well as diversity of students are factors affecting education. However, Information technology and computers presents the ability to solve many of these challenges. Higher education institutions responded by using advanced information technologies in the globalization era.

According to Abernathy (1999), "Online learning is not the next big thing; it is the now big thing" and up till now, the debate about the benefits of eLearning is still being discussed in education sectors globally. It was on this assertion that Sarwar, Ketavan, and Butt (2015) summarised some benefits of eLearning as follows;

1. **Accessibility:** The authors posited that one main advantage of eLearning is accessibility. It has ensured education with no boundaries geographically. While some students may find it difficult moving to another country to study, eLearning simply gives them an option. ELearning eliminates all restrictions, allowing individuals from all over the world to complete trainings and courses interested in virtually. Those who are either physically or psychologically unable to be present in a classroom can continue their educational development through online courses.
2. **Mobility:** Another notable benefit of eLearning is the opportunity for continuing education where fulltime workers or people engaging in other activities requiring fulltime attention gain the chance to study at any place and at any time due to its mobility features. This has accommodated them and their needs perfectly. It has been established that today's learners want a personalized, mobile approach to education, and that is exactly what eLearning option provides.
3. **Resource scalability:** A wide range of resources are required in the education of students in the traditional setting of education. This is why it is not often easy for a single teacher or lecturer to be able to teach a large number of learners in just one classroom or at a corporate training institution. However, the adoption of eLearning platform, on the other hand, has made teaching capacity to be virtually infinite. With money and time saved, more

resources can be preserved as well. Scalability enhances the effects of learning and teaching processes, helping both parties involved.

4. **Effective results:** The effectiveness of eLearning platforms is not debatable as evidences in literature has shown (Gambari, Shittu, Ogunlade, and Osunlade, 2018). Therefore, the flexibility of the eLearning platforms has made more students to be able to grasp the information received through eLearning. The positivity of eLearning practices has also been established to bring better results to organizations in the training of their employees. There is also the evidence of improved scores on evaluations (tests, certifications etc.), information retainment for longer periods of time and while students' pass rate has also increased (Baker, Barton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, Ladd, Linn, Ravitch, Rothstein, Shavelson, and Shepard, 2010).
5. **Self-paced learning:** Though, the traditional educational method ensured an enclosed time bound to learning periods**,** eLearning comes with a leaping advantage in terms of schedule freedom. Many students have in the past found it difficult keeping pace with the demands of curriculum (Richmond, Burn, Dougill, Raleigh, and Traves, 2017), which often times prevent them from attaining the desired academic achievement (Dunne, Humphreys, Sebba, Dyson, Gallannaugh, and Muijs, 2007), eLearning (courses) allow learners to enjoy a self-paced learning schedules. Students can now study at their own time and pace being easier to incorporate learning in their busy life schedules, irrespective of specifics. Full-time employees or individuals who simply do not have the necessary time to attend physical classes are now carried along. Learning and completing courses after work, in the evening, on the weekends or when they have spare time is possible through eLearning mode. Hence, collaborative softwares, recorded lessons, webinars, written contents in form of coursewares etcetera have thrown possibilities and multiplies the chance of anyone with an Internet connection access to learning as they can have easy access to learning resources. As reports indicate, in 2017 alone, around 27 million individuals on a global scale took their first Massive Open Online Course, rounding up a number of 81 million online learners at over 800 universities (Shah, 2019).

Source: https://www.classcentral.com/report/mooc-stats-2017/

Even universities with high reputation, such as Harvard and Yale, are embracing learning technologies, supporting students who benefit more from a self-paced learning process.

6. **Quick lesson delivery cycles:** Comparing eLearning and the traditional education mode, the positive difference in lesson delivery cycles can easily be spotted. For example, eLearning facilitates a reduction in learning time by even up to 60% (Turban, Outland, King, Lee, Liang, and Turban, 2017) and reduces study time based on the fact that a single learning session may be

enough to wrap up an entire lesson, learners may not have to keep up with the learning speed of the entire classroom group and to travel to a certain institution – eliminating commuting. Students, can therefore, focus solely on learning material areas relevant to them.

7. **Improved metrics:** One other visible benefit of eLearning is the ease tracking of the effectiveness of the teaching method adopted. Tracking how effective a traditional teaching method is, is actually challenging. Evaluating results, keeping a close tab on the progress of students taking action based on results cannot always be easily possible in a physical classroom. Invariably, eLearning, on the other hand, provides a more effective learning management system. An online course curriculum comes with improved metrics. It's easier to spot study results, which are later measured and improved through necessary changes.
8. **Upskilling:** Individuals need to maintain their skills and set to achieve relevant new skills for the current industries' and workplaces' demands. It is not a gainsaying that the current society we live in is technology driven. Thence, the type of education to be obtained must be the one that provides the needed up-to-date knowledge needed to keep abreast of tech trends. These types of knowledge are required by organisations from their staff, therefore, upskilling becomes a necessity. The major setback here is that it is difficult for people to go back to class and access this much skill acquisition. eLearning comes to the rescue. Diversifying their area of expertise is far easier with eLearning.
9. **Cost considerations:** The high expenses of traditional education can often prevent individuals from accessing the academic journey they desire, or the career boost they target. A strong advantage of eLearning, which has been linked to the popularity increase of this trend in recent years, is a reduction in costs. Due to the fact that learning time and resources are reduced, eLearning becomes the more cost-effective alternative. eLearning through this mode is fast and easy, therefore, naturally a decrease in expenses occurs. Larger organisations will also prefer to use the eLearning option for their workforces' in-service training since it offers them reduced bids.
10. **Helps students stay relevant in quickly changing environments:** We live in a fast-paced word, and traditional learning is often an obstacle, due to outdated learning resources. Digital learning makes it possible to update study materials fast and in real time, keeping content fresh and relevant in quickly changing environments. When students are taking an online class, they can be certain the information received is updated to the current climate, whereas in traditional settings, textbooks may still contain outdated, irrelevant content.
11. **Environmental impact:** Lastly, eLearning impacts the environment. Activists are encouraging sustainability practices in all spheres, and education is not left behind. Organizations are pinpointing the eco-friendly nature of eLearning since it is a paperless study method. According to (González, 2010), eLearning also consumes up to 90% less power, therefore, activists of environmentally-conscious way of studying have directed attention to eLearning opportunities. The subject of eLearning is a cast one, addressing a wide variety of aspects. While at the time, digital learning technologies cannot completely eliminate the need for traditional learning, it has become essential for the modern student. With powerful advantages, eLearning is driving more interest than ever and demands for it likely to continue to rise.

COVID-19 and eLearning Option: Trends and Analysis

As countries are at different points in their COVID-19 infection rates, worldwide there are currently more than 1.2 billion children in 186 countries affected by school closures due to the pandemic including Nigeria. Though some countries for example in Denmark, are beginning

to reopening schools for school children up to the age of 11, many countries still have their schools closed, while country such as South Korea has completely moved online (Vogel, and Couzin-Frankel, 2020).

Yet, the sudden shift away from the classroom in some countries of the world, heralded a debate whether the option of eLearning will continue post-COVID-19 pandemic, and how such will impact the worldwide education endeavour. Prior to COVID-19, eLearning adoption was at incremental level and still same in present global community as company like edtech invested a whopping US$18.66 billion in 2019 alone (GmbH, 2020) and the overall market for online education projected to reach $350 Billion by 2025. Whether it is language apps, virtual tutoring, video conferencing tools, or online learning software, there has been a significant surge in usage since COVID-19.

Response of the education sector and eLearning software firms to COVID-19

Responding to the increase demand in eLearning platform, numerous eLearning providers such as content developers, software engineers, hardware producers etcetera have swung to action to complement on the past gains as some even makes their platforms free (for example, BYJU's which is Bangalore-based educational technology and online tutoring firm founded in 2011 and which is presently the world's most highly rated edtech company) due to the pandemic announced free classes on its educational app. Right from the time it announced free live classes on its Think and Learn app to be free for use, it has seen a 200% increase in the number of new students using its product (Mohit, 2020).

Also, the Chinese government in February 2020 instructed the K-12 students to resume studies online via Tencent Classroom app, an approximate of a quarter of a billion started using the app. According to Li and Lalani (2020), the Chinese government's instruction resulted in what is termed as the largest online movement in the history of eLearning as an approximation of 730,000 equaling 81% of K-12 students in Wuhan, China attending classes via the Tencent K-12 Online School app.

Other eLearning education platform companies are also jostling to improve their capacities with the mind of providing a one-stop shop for teachers and students. For instance, Lark, based in Singapore, a collaboration app which was initially developed by ByteDance for collaborative educational meetings as a way of improving its services, began to offer teachers and students unlimited video conferencing time, real-time co-editing of project work, auto-translation capabilities as well as smart calendar scheduling, amongst other features. The firm also ramped up its global server infrastructure and engineering capabilities so as to ensure reliable connectivity during this COVID-19 pandemic era.

In Nigeria, particularly in the southwest region, efforts by some state-owned broadcasting firms have also lend credence to this new trend. For example, the Ogun DigiClass airs on Ogun State Television (OGTV) Monday to Friday from 11am to 1 pm teaches the core subject of English language, mathematics and sciences to both primary and secondary school students. Also the Oyo State government through its state-owned F M radio network equally airs question and answer segment for secondary school students preparing for general exams.

Equally, the Alibaba's distance learning solution known as DingTalk, swiftly prepared for a similar influx. To support large-scale remote work, the platform tapped Alibaba Cloud to deploy more than 100,000 new cloud servers in just two hours setting a new record for rapid capacity expansion in order to accommodate numerous expectations and UNESCO listed it as part of its distance learning solutions during the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2020).

Another impetus to the current era is the formulation of consortium by schools particularly in the developed worlds. For example, The Los Angeles Unified School District and PBS SoCal/KCET in order to offer local educational broadcasts, merged to reduce problems, that may be associated with separate channels focusing on different ages, and ranges of digital options which may create confusion. Media organizations such as the BBC are also powering virtual learning; Bitesize Daily, launched on 20 April, is offering 14 weeks of

curriculum-based learning for kids across the UK with celebrities teaching some of the content.

ELearning and the future of education

There is the general believe that the unplanned and rapid move to eLearning characterized by lack of initial training, sodding preparation and insufficient bandwidth will result in a poor user experience because the growth may not be sustainable, there is still the believe that a new hybrid model of education will emerge and with its significant benefits. Li and Lalani (2020) was of the believe that the integration of information technology in education will be accelerated further while eLearning will become eventually an integral part of school education.

Already, successful transitions among several universities have been established. The Zhejiang University in China was able to get more than 5,000 courses online in just two weeks after closing its campuses due to COVID-19 with the facility of its "DingTalk ZJU" information system. Also, the Imperial College London started offering a course on the science of coronavirus, become the most enrolled class launched in 2020 on Coursera (Li and Lalani, 2020).

With these achievements, university professors are beginning to echo the importance of eLearning platforms. The authors stated further that using Lark to teach classes at University of Jordan has changed the way lecturers at the university teach. Li and Lalani, (2020) claimed that eLearning platforms has enabled tutors in the university to reach more students effectively and efficiently through video meetings, chat groups, document sharing and voting platforms for quiz and tests during the pandemic. Further, the scholars stated that eLearning and the traditional learning modules can go hand in hand.

The challenges of eLearning

As much as lots of benefits are attributed to eLearning, challenges to overcome are equally Brobdingnagian. Issues ranging from students without reliable Internet access and/or technology and struggling to participate in digital learning still persists globally. The data of OECD affirmed that this gap is seen across countries and between income brackets within countries. For example, whilst 95% of students in Switzerland, Norway, and Austria have a computer to use for their schoolwork, only 34% in Indonesia do. The number is even far low in Africa and Nigeria in particular (Reimers, and Schleicher, 2020).

In the US, there is a significant gap between those from privileged and disadvantaged backgrounds: whilst virtually all 15-year-olds from a privileged background said they had a computer to work on, nearly 25% of those from disadvantaged backgrounds did not. While some schools and governments have been providing digital equipment to students in need, such as in New South Wales, Australia, many are still concerned that the pandemic will widen the digital divide.

The foregoing indicates that eLearning is being made more prominent by the COVID-19 pandemic and the trend will surpass the post-COVID era. With the current heaving reliant on eLearning platforms in sustaining the education activities, there is clear indication that the future of education will transform from being basically traditional (where the tutor and learners must physical be present at a geographical location) to hybrid (where there will be limitation to physical presence of both the tutor and learners).

COVID-19, eLearning and E-Readiness of Nigerian Universities

Several studies have been carried out concerning e-readiness among Nigerian universities to drive the eLearning activities, all directional to ill-equipped ICT infrastructure, baseline software development plan and adoption and lackluster training for staff. Eweni, Meyinsse, Mbarika, and Okpechi (2013) conducted a study of e-readiness assessment focusing on three Nigerian universities namely Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Covenant and Bells Universities both in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. key findings indicated that though the universities were perceived to be seeking speeding adoption of digital technologies actively, however, the speed of adoption is reportedly low, the pre-conditions for digital technology were not established as there is lack of blue print for e-readiness. It was equally reported in the study that there are no national government agencies that provides

well-articulated technology strategies, while in existence in the universities are lack of financial support adequate to support eLearning and lack of national technological policy initiative or leadership.

Ditimi and Ayanda (2013) also found that in Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji Arakeji, Osun State, Lead City University, Ibadan, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo and Oduduwa University, Ile Ife, students do not have access to computers and Internet facilities to access eLearning. The study also reported infrastructural deficiencies and lack of man power to drive eLearning in the universities surveyed.

In University of Ibadan, Olatokun and Opesade (2008) highlighted the historical timeline of the efforts puts in place by the premier university to adopt and use ICT in driving its services both academic and administrative. The authors stated that University of Ibadan has been investing greatly in ICT infrastructure visibly from 2001 when it formulated its ICT policy which contained;

1. Re-branding the image of the University through modernization and reorientation
2. Improvement of internal & external communications
3. Enhancement of the learning environment/teaching & research aids
4. Improvement of the level of computer literacy amongst staff and students
5. Enhancement of staff productivity
6. Establishment of an efficient and effective student/staff information management system ⎪ Development of a robust ICT architecture that will support current and future ICT needs of the University of Ibadan
7. Establishment of a sustainable ICT facility through the introduction of some commercially viable ventures such as Internet service provider (ISP) services
8. Identification and establishment of various funding alternatives
9. Establishment of a distance learning facility
10. Establishment of a distance admission process for foreign students
11. Establishment of a structured ICT organization

To achieve its stated objectives, the university acquired, installed and configured a Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSAT) which replaced the old microwave media and human resources it hitherto had. The university also increase its bandwidth from 256/1024Kbps to 512/2048kbps and after that to 2MB/4MB. It equally increased its small networks from nine (9) to more than thirty (30) larger units of network units while there was also an establishment of new two resource centres comprising of 65 and 80 personal computer systems for the usage of staff and students respectively. Based on the results obtained by Olatokun and Opesade (2008), the university showed positive indices that specify it was e-ready as infrastructural availability, ICT deployment for university activities, infrastructural access, policy and regulatory frameworks all yielded an above average rating. However, manpower availability was found to be key issues.

In support of the findings of Olatokun and Opesade (2008), Nwagwu (2019) surveyed the opinion of lecturers in the premier university concerning their perceptions regarding e-preparedness of the university and they as stakeholders of eLearning. Two hundred and forty (240) academics participated in the survey through a structured questionnaire, results showed that the lecturers were confident that the University possessed the IT capacity in terms of infrastructure and staff regarding eLearning implementation. They were however indifferent concerning the ability of the students to be able to key in into the eLearning scheme based on the students' perceived low knowledge of eLearning, lack of sufficient IT and web skills to drive eLearning.

Summary and Conclusion

It is clear that this pandemic has utterly disrupted the education system that many assert was already losing its relevance, particularly in Nigeria. Schools should start focusing more on

skills such as critical thinking and adaptability, which will be more important for success in the future rather than traditional academic skills and rote learning (Havari, 2018). eLearning based on its proven positivity, could be the catalyst to create a new, more effective method of education where there will be cross-border information, knowledge and skill sharing globally. The hasty nature of the transition to eLearning occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic may have hindered this goal, others plan to make eLearning part of their 'new normal' after experiencing the benefits first-hand.

Major world events are often an inflection point for rapid innovation – a clear example is the rise of e-commerce post-SARS. While the author of this article has yet to see whether this will apply to eLearning post-COVID-19, it is one of the few sectors where investment has not dried up. What has been made clear through this pandemic is the importance of disseminating knowledge across borders, companies, and all parts of society. If eLearning technology can play a role here, it is incumbent upon all Universities to explore its full potential.

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