ASSESSING STUDENTS' USE OF INTERNET SERVICES IN PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study assessed students' use of Internet services in private secondary schools in Nigeria. Three objectives and three research questions guided the study. The design of the study is a descriptive survey which used questionnaire and observation as the instrument for data collection. The population of the study was 337 senior secondary school students (SS2) from 72 private secondary schools in the Onitsha Education zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. Data generated was analyzed with mean statistic. It was found that the students were exposed to Internet services to a high extent; fun and entertainment ranked highest as perceived benefits of the Internet; and lack of access to utilize the Internet services at will was the greatest challenge faced by the students.

INTRODUCTION

Private secondary schools are schools owned and managed by private individuals or private organizations rather that by the governments. They are not owned and administered by local, state or Federal government. Private schools in Nigeria are established to encourage private sector participation in the establishment and running of schools, complement government efforts in the formal educational development of the children in Nigeria and participate in formulation of policies (FRN, 2004).

The contributions of Private Secondary Schools to social and economic development cannot be over-emphasized. In the present information and knowledge world, Nigeria and other countries are faced with changes induced by market trends, development in information and communication technology (ICT) and the likes, that have engulfed business organizations, institutions, society and education in general. The development in ICT has affected the

operations as well as the purpose of private secondary education systems with respect to curriculum content, instructional aids and methods of teaching. These new challenges and opportunities especially in ICT cannot be addressed with outdated educational tools but by developing a formidable curriculum studies and effectively utilizing the Internet services in teaching, learning situations.

Internet has a revolutionary impact on educational methodology globally. According to Inyiana (2002), the Internet has indeed turned the world into a global village such that any nation or business that opts to remain an island would quickly cease to be relevant in this millennium.

Recognizing the tremendous role the Internet plays in the education and development of the youth, the National Policy on Education made provision for Internet in school libraries and stated:

Government shall provide necessary infrastructures in information and communication technology/Internet in the school system in recognition of the role of ICT in advancing knowledge and skill in the modern world (FRN 2004: 5).

Today, the Internet is used by more than 50 percent of the world population as its applications are found in nearly every field of life be it communication, knowledge, news, shopping, marketing, entertainment and education (Baekhe, 2010). Providing Internet facilities in the school library makes it easier for many students to have access to the Internet.
While the government policy emphasizes provision of infrastructures in public schools what is the fate of private schools? According to the Anambra State Ministry of Education, there are 331 and 229 private and public secondary schools respectively, in the state.

In Onitsha Education zone there are 72 private secondary schools with over 20,250 enrolment figure. The implication of this is that whatever happens in these private schools would have serious impact on educational system of the state. Hence this study is very necessary to highlight application of Internet services in the private secondary schools.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of the study is to assess students' use of Internet services in the private secondary school libraries in Onitsha Education Zone. The Specific Objectives of the study are to find out:
1. Extent of exposure of students to the use of Internet services in the private

secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

2. The perceived benefits of Internet services utilization in private secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

3. The perceived challenges facing Internet services utilization among students in private secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. To what extent are the school students in private secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone exposed to Internet services?

2. How do private secondary students in Onitsha education zone perceive Internet service utilization as beneficial to their learning?

3. How do private secondary school students in Onitsha Education zone perceive some challenges as affecting their Internet service utilization in learning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The best any school library can do for its pupils is to provide them with a well connected Internet facility and teach them how to access it to retrieve information and other sundry sources (Onwubiko, 2004). According to Hang, Cummings and Rea (2004) the Internet access consists of modem, with the four primary alternatives being a telephone modem, Digital subscriber line modern, cable modem and satellite modem. Modems are telecommunication devices that allow connection of computer to another computer or to a network of other computers. The type of modem the private schools use depends on cost and availability of the facility and necessary service.

Factors essential for successful use of the Internet in schools according to Ebifung (2005) include knowledge and usage of the Internet services, training on continual basis; availability of equipment and technical assistance; supportive administration; collaboration with other teachers, collaboration with other students, and advanced planning. Ebifung (2005) emphasized that students should be encouraged to use the Internet because it has motivating factors; provides fast communication, access to information, offers interactive activities, cooperative learning; locating research materials; and acquiring varied writing skills. Oyeyinka and Adeya (2005) found that initial cost of end-user equipment limits the ownership of personal computers, compelling students to seek Internet access in cyber cafes and other places.

Inadequate availability of computers and Internet facilities in schools, lack of fund,

lack of skilled personnel, intermittent electric power cuts have been identified as major problems that militate against the use of Internet in schools (Emenyonu, Bangsbery, Kiwanuka & Jybara, 2006).

The need for availability and utilization of Internet in school library has been viewed by Haag, Cummings and Rea (2004) as inevitable and something that could be used in all spheres of life to improve the lives of people and solve social problems. Laudon and Laudon (2002) stressing the need for Internet use in education said that Internet is a very fast method of communication, with messages arriving anywhere in the world within seconds or a minute or two at most. According to Hobson (2007) the Internet and use of personal computers have altered many students and teachers well established habits like the way the media is used. Today students and teachers are more likely to read the morning headlines on-line than in the newspaper on the breakfast table. This shows that the utilization of Internet is for both teachers and students to broaden their knowledge. Le Roy (2005) stressed that the Internet is only a part of the school library which helps in liberating the students from the bonds of educational entrenchment as well as quicken all learning activities.

Kayode-Edebor (2011) investigated the use, extent of use, and specific purposes for which secondary students use the Internet. The study was based on cyber cafes in Ibadan, Nigeria, and purposively selected target population of secondary school students who visited 20 cyber cafes for Internet surfing. On analysis of 261 of 300 questionnaires administered, the study indicated that 59% of the respondents perceive using the Internet as an inexpensive modern technology; 56.3% of the students affirmed that they receive a lot of encouragement from their school teachers to use the Internet. Though motivated to use, they identified factors such as easy access, lack of good guidance, inability to get required information as barriers to their full exploitation of the Internet. Unfortunately the teachers in private secondary schools in Ibadan, South West of Nigeria indicated they have access to ICTs in their various schools except e-mail and Internet because their schools are not connected (Tella, et al., 2011). Without access to the Internet, the ICTs cannot provide meaningful impact on the teaching and learning of the students.

Use of Internet enabled mobile-phone to surf the Internet is fast gaining attention among students. Aboderin, Tella, et al., (2011) found that 65% of the students that have access to the Internet indicated the using of Internet enabled mobile-phone to surf the Net. Aboderin, et al (2011) revealed that 51% and 46.9% of the students in their survey had access to Internet and computers respectively. This implies

that the proliferation of the Internet enabled mobile-phone had contributed greatly to the medium through students surfing the Net. The present study emphasizes Internet use in the private secondary school libraries in Onitsha, South East, Nigeria. No study was found to have focused on Internet use in private schools in Onitsha Education Zone in particular or Anambra State as a whole.

METHODOLOGY
The study is a descriptive survey which used questionnaire and observation as instrument for data collection. The population consisted of 3,374 senior secondary school students (SS2) from 72 private secondary schools in Onitsha Education zone in Anambra State, Nigeria. Onitsha Education zone has three local government areas-Onitsha North, Onitsha South and Ogbaru.

The researchers after visiting the 72 private secondary schools found out that only 30 schools had Internet access. It was decided that for the purpose of the study, only schools with up to 5 years Internet access will be involved in the study. This was to ensure that the Internet service was stable.

Out of the 30 schools, 12 schools (Onitsha North 7 and Onitsha South 5) had Internet access for up to 5 years and therefore qualify to be involved. Four schools from Onitsha North and four schools from Onitsha South were randomly selected by balloting. All the eighty students in each of the SS2 classes in the schools totaling 640 constitutes the sample. This was made up of 214 male and 426 female students.

INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION
Internet Availability and Utilization Survey Questionnaire (IAUSQ) designed by the researchers after literature review was used to elicit information on the students' response/view on usage of the Internet facilities. Five point rating scale of very high extent (VHE). High extent (HE), Undecided (UD), low extent (LE) and very low extent (VLE) was used to check four items for usage. Also five point rating scale of strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used to obtain perception of the students on benefits of the Internet services and challenges facing Internet services utilization.

Reliability, co-efficient of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha formula; after the instrument was administered to ten students from Delight Secondary School, Ogidi, Idemili Education Zone. The data yielded a score of .716, .797 and .831 thereby confirming reliability.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Six hundred and forty questionnaires were distributed to the respondents on first visit. After a week interval 610 were retrieved. Thirty were not returned while 10 copies were not completed. A total of 600 copies of the questionnaire were completely filled out of the 640 copies that were distributed to the students. This gave a response rate of 93.75percent.

The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using mean. An item with a mean cut-off point that is equal to or greater than 3.5 was accepted as either high extent or agreed while item with a mean cut-off point less than 3.5 was accepted as either low extent or disagree.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Mean scores of the students on the extent of their exposure to Internet services

Nos.	ITEMS	X	REMARK
i	There are functional Internet services owned by the school for browsing	3.68	High extent
ii	Students are knowledgeable in the use of Internet	3.63	High extent
iii	Periodic training is organized for students on the use of Internet services	3.77	High extent
iv	Students are exposed to the use of Internet services in learning	3.83	High extent

Table 1 shows the mean scores of the students on the extent of their exposure to Internet services. With mean scores ranging from 3.63 to 3.83 the students were exposed to Internet services to a high extent in all the conditions studied. This finding is supported by the findings of Ajayi and Ekundayo (2009); Aboderin et al (2011) that students were to a high extent exposed to the use of Internet services. It is necessary to expose students to Internet facilities to enable them gain knowledge in the utilization of Internet facilities. Such exposures enhance students understanding of the basic practical skills they need to cope with today's

business and educational environment. This finding is supported by the findings of Ajayi and Ekundayo (2009) that providing functional Internet facilities (ICT) in the school library makes it easier for as many students as possible to have access to the Internet. Also Baehke (2010) opined that continuous and periodic training of students and teachers on computer and Internet skills acquisition will provide them with practical and functional knowledge of the computers, the Internet associated areas of ICT with the hope of integrating it with instructional materials of teaching and learning.

Table 2: Mean score of the students on perceived benefits of Internet services to students

Nos.	ITEMS	X	REMARK
i	Internet helps the students to do class assignment	3.92	Agreed
ii	Internet helps student to communicate with others	3.80	Agreed
iii	Internet helps the students to update their knowledge	3.89	Agreed
iv	Internet helps the student to read latest news	3.72	Agreed
v	It helps students to exchange views globally	3.87	Agreed
vi	It helps in down loading software	3.92	Agreed
vii	Internet helps students to get wide variety of information	3.42	Disagreed
viii	Internet is fast and efficient	3.78	Agreed
ix	It helps students to have fun and entertainment	4.14	Agreed
x	It enables students to learn at their own pace	4.13	Agreed
xi	It enhances students career prospects	3.82	Agreed
xii	It helps students get help from class mates	3.40	Disagreed

Table 2 shows how students in private secondary schools in Onitsha Education zone perceive Internet service utilization in learning. The students identified 10 out of the 12 benefits studied with mean scores ranging from 3.72 to 4.14, and disagreed on two at level of being undecided. Two variables considered very beneficial by the respondents are remarkable; it helps students to have fun and entertainment ranked highest with a mean score of 4.14; while it enables students to learn at their own pace with a mean score of 4.13. This reveals that the perceived benefits of the Internet to the students for learning cannot be overemphasized.

The finding agreed with Kaur (2006) that purpose for Internet use include educational, browsing, updating of knowledge, fun and entertainment. The infusion of Internet services in learning experiences will help students have access to information which are highly valued for today's educational system.
According to Ajayi and Ekundayo (2009), it makes teaching and learning more

interesting. The findings also corroborate Kwachie (2007) who submitted that application of Internet services makes institutions more efficient and productive, enhance and facilitate pedagogical activities.

Table 3: Mean scores of students on the challenges faced by the students on the adoption of Internet services in learning

Nos.	ITEMS	X	REMARK
i	Most secondary schools lack committed trained personnel	3.82	Agreed
ii	Irregular power supply hinders the use of Internet services	3.89	Agreed
iii	Students are very reluctant to adopt the use of Internet in learning process	4.05	Agreed
iv	The cost of purchasing computer/Internet access in the school is high	3.83	Agreed
v	There are inadequate facilities to support full application of Internet technology	3.67	Agreed
vi	The non-inclusion of Internet programmes in school curriculum affects its adoption in schools	3.67	Agreed
vii	Lack of fund hinders private secondary schools from embracing Internet access	4.08	Agreed
viii	Lack of teachers experienced in Internet services	2.44	Disagreed
ix	Time consuming as it requires more technical support	2.46	Disagreed
x	Lack of access to utilize the Internet services at will	4.12	Agreed
xi	Insufficient time allotment on the school timetable for Internet utilization	3.82	Agreed

Table 3 shows how the students perceive some challenges as affecting their Internet service utilization in learning. The students identified 9 out of 11 challenges studied with mean scores ranging from 3.67 to 4.12. Hence students agreed that they encounter challenges in utilization of Internet facilities for learning.

That lack of access to utilize the Internet services at will have the highest mean score of 4.12 is not surprising. Many proprietors of the private schools introduced Internet services in their schools to use them for advertisement to enable them charge higher school fees. The ICT studies has not been fully integrated in the curriculum to enable students derive maximum benefit from them. The finding supports Tella et al (2011) that private secondary schools have access to ICT but are not connected to the Internet. High cost of Internet access introduces

operational cost to the proprietors. To keep the cost low, the schools provide computers without regular connecting them to the Internet. This defeats one of the major benefits of ICT in teaching and learning.

Epileptic power supply is a national problem that has adverse effects on all sectors of the economy. This supports the findings of Yusuf (2005) and Ofodu (2007) that irregular power supply in Nigeria is a major obstacle to the usage of Internet services in all spheres of the economy. The respondents disagree that lack of teachers experienced in Internet services as a problem. This is contrary to Kwachie (2007) and Oyebanji (2003) that lack of skilled manpower to manage available system and facilities for Internet service hinders its use in schools. It could be that the schools employed trained personnel to man their Internet services.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This is awareness regarding the potentials of Internet services in learning because the students themselves understood the benefits. The findings of the study indicate that Internet facilities in private schools in Onitsha Education Zone are inadequate. Despite the perceived benefits in the use of Internet service in school, there are a lot of factors inhibiting the successful application of Internet services in private secondary schools.

Obviously, the inadequacy of Internet services is detrimental to the students learning. As only 30 out of the 72 private schools in the zone have Internet facilities many students pass out of the secondary schools without exposure to the Internet which today constitutes the major source of global information.

We therefore recommend that:
1. Government should compel all proprietors of private secondary schools to provide Internet services in their schools. This will equip the students with Internet skills which are necessary for success in the information society.
2. Proprietors should provide generators to support power supply from public power supply.
3. Internet technology should be integrated in the curriculum and adequate provision made for it in school time table.

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