

Relevance of Electronic-Learning (E-learning) in the study of geography in Universities to Achieve Global Education

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Abstract

The study focussed on the relevance of e-learning in the study of geography in Nigerian universities to achieve global education. Two research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. The study population was 1,241 and with the use of Stratified Random Sampling Technique, a sample size of 366 was drawn. A questionnaire with 22 items was used for data collection which was duly validated and its reliability of 0.92 established using Cronbach Alpha Procedure. Three hundred and fifty (350) copies of the instrument were properly filled and used for the study. Data collected were analyzed using means, standard deviations and 't' test statistic at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that the lecturers and the students agreed that the use of e-learning in the study of geography would enhance global education as the world is tending towards becoming a global village.

Keyword: Relevance; electronic-learning; geography; universities; global-education and globalization

INTRODUCTION

Education as a tool empowers children or adults to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that lead to behavioural change. It is a basic force for the socio-economic and political transformation of any society (Ivowi, 2010). According to Ogah (2014) curriculum delivery or the implementation of the curriculum at the classroom level with the use of appropriate instructional strategies and materials will enhance teaching and learning. It then means that any functional education should be able to prepare students to discover latent potentials and develop them to the fullest. Learners need to be equipped with relevant tools including academic knowledge to develop the necessary competences to excel in life. The peak of this preparation is at the higher education level.

Tertiary or higher education is all the organized learning activities offered after post-basic education level in institutions such as: Universities and their affiliate/allied institutions; Polytechnics and Monotechnics; Colleges of Education and other specialist institutions. One of the goals of tertiary education as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2014:52-54) is: "Promoting and encouraging scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service" Specifically, university education is expected to make optimum contribution to national development. These goals as embedded in the document can be achieved through teaching, research, and dissemination of existing and new information and the pursuit of service.

Obanya (2007) posits that the goals of higher education are in consonance with the world's declaration on higher education at the world conference in 1998. According to the author, the conference reaffirmed that education is a fundamental pillar of human rights, democracy, sustainable development and peace; therefore it should be accessible to all. To effect the necessary change in the learners, education delivery must be packaged in such a way as to empower the youths to be productive and dynamic in a changing world like ours. As a result, the present era of globalization places a demand on the youths of all nation to brace up in order to meet up with the demands of digitalization. There is the need to reposition nations' curricula to meet up with the demand, by re-engineering the methods/ procedures and the contents of all disciplines. With the modern trend of digitalization, most of the disciplines in the curricula need to be restructured in a way to fit into the global village. The present study focuses on the discipline-geography and the relevance of e-learning in its study to achieve global education.

Geography is a discipline which uses scientific methodology in finding answers to problems generated through interaction of man in the physical and social environment. It is derived from a Greek word which literally means 'to write about the earth'. Presenting a concise definition, Buchanan (1974) posits that geography is the study of the diverse features/patterns on the Earth's surface such as relief, climate, vegetation, soils, economic resources, their whole description, development, distribution and their interaction with man. It is a discipline that seeks to understand the world and its human and physical features through spatial location/distribution. Buchanan in Emesini (2012:1) defined geography as the study of diverse features on the earth's surface such as; its relief; climate vegetation, soils economic resources, their description, division, distribution and their interaction with man. Minshull cited in Emesini (2012) pointed out that geography teachers need proper understanding in order to guide students aright and explain to them, the value of geography and its relevance both to education and to everyday life.

As a discipline, geography is important for the progress and development of any society. Its worth stems from its nature as a tool for the development of the individual and the entire society. The value of geography is embedded in two of the Nigerian national objectives as stated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) thus:

- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and
- The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences, both mental

and physical, as equipment of the individual, to live and contribute to the development of his society. (p.8).

The national objectives stated above can be accomplished using the tool of geography which has diverse ways of exploring the environment and its people. Geography does this by creating opportunities for exploring the different people of the world, their human activities and adjustments on the earth surface.

Based on the national objectives of education, Nigeria Education, Research and Development Council (NERDC) (2007) developed the geography curriculum and enlists its objectives thus; to:

- Understand the concept of man-environment relations;
- Appreciate and develop a sense of responsibility towards one's own society and intelligent interest in the formation of national goals and policies, especially as they influence the different resources and regions of the area;
- Develop sympathetic understanding of the people of other lands;
- Organize and formulate principles according to acquired geographic concepts, which they can use to analyze and interpret spatial problems in their immediate and wider environment, (p.5-6).

With these laudable objectives of geography, the discipline is still facing the challenge of compressing its vastness, to make it attractive and competitive for the teeming Nigerian youths. An increasing number of geography authorities are considering new and better approaches to its study; hence the need to examine the relevance of e-learning in its study. Geography plays a key role in national development; so its teaching and learning need to be enhanced. This calls for its repositioning in line with the nation's yearning of moving forward in this era of globalization. As the world tends towards becoming a global village through the World Wide Web (WWW), the study of geography may likely be re-positioned through e-learning. Nwagu & Azih (2016) pointed out that the utilization of computers in teaching and learning will promote active learning, as it will help in developing appropriate level of capacity in learners used in teaching.

Electronic-learning (e-learning) is a component part of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) that involves the application of information technologies, and communicating same through electronic gadgets. It is also a type of learning and knowledge derived from the use of computer-aided gadgets (Noah, 2002). Rees, Mackay, Martins, Conole and Davis (2008) see e-learning as the application of advanced learning technology that is computer based that makes delivery of lesson flexible, interactive and long lasting. Eya (2006) reiterates that e-learning is the largest and the most challenging application of ICT in the delivery of education. The author sees e-learning as the process of e-literate teachers communicating with e-literate learners with up-to-date books and information using electronic skills. Again Abidonye & Fakodunde (2015) added that electronic learning is any technologically mediated learning using computers, whether from a distance or in face to face classroom setting. Nwokike in Ikechukwu and Njoku (2014) noted that e-learning is the use of computers

for localized digital learning. That it allows for efficient transfer of knowledge anywhere and anytime, regardless of subject matter. This opens up a world of learning available globally.

According to Alumode (2013), e-learning has enhanced group collaborations, asynchronous interaction, discovering of new educational approach and to access programmes anywhere and at any time in the world. Braham (2009) and Babalola (2010) describe e-learning as a web-based application and transfer of digital information that aid the process of creating, managing and evaluation of educational resources. Sharan in Adebayo (2012) posits that e-learning creates an opportunity for cooperative learning, which is an approach of organizing classroom activities into academic and social learning experience. Algahtani in Arkorful & Abaidoo (2014) enlisted three ways of employing e-learning in education thus: as adjunct e-learning when it is applied as an assistant in the traditional classroom; Blended e-learning which involves delivering and explaining of course materials shared between the traditional and electronic method. Finally, as online method which is fully void of traditional method. Examples of synchronous online technology include: video-conferencing, webcasts, interactive learning models and telephone conferencing, virtual worlds and chat rooms (Olofo, O. J. Ademimi, M.G. & Ajisola K. T, 2012 & Amit, 2015)

The world is becoming a global village. Academic practitioners are playing key roles of guiding and assisting students in gaining the skills and abilities required to acquire and utilize knowledge packaged in various forms around the world. Agbiogwu (2012) refers to the growing interconnections and interdependence of people and institutions throughout the world as a globalization process. This process has necessitated the examination of e-learning and its relevance in the study of geography in Nigerian universities to achieve global education.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The approach in the study of geography in Nigerian universities has been a process of one method replacing the other in order to curtail its vastness which has been a source of scare and challenge to the students. This replacement process has not really helped to solve the problem in order to simplify its study. Present day youths are digitally minded and Nigerian youths are in a hurry to key in into the globalization process and to catch up with their fellows globally. Geography as the study of the earth as a home of man may likely be re-positioned in the global village through e-learning. This might make its study in our universities easier and interesting to our youths, as it would likely reduce its vastness to mere interaction and discussion classes from all sides of the globe. The problem of the study now is: In what ways is e-learning relevant in the study of geography in Nigerian universities to enhance global education?

Objectives of the Study

The study sought the opinions of geography lecturers and students on the relevance of e-learning in the study of geography in universities in Nigeria to promote global

education. Specifically the study sought to examine the opinions of the:

1. University lecturers on the relevance of e-learning in the teaching of geography to promote global education;
2. University students on the relevance of e-learning in the learning of geography to promote global education.

The study was guided by two research questions thus:

1. In what ways are e-learning relevant in the teaching of geography in Nigerian universities to enhance global education?
2. In what ways are e-learning relevant in the learning of geography in Nigerian universities to enhance global education?

One null hypothesis was formulated for the study and was tested at 0.05 level of significance thus: There will be no significant difference in the mean opinions of university lecturers and students on the relevance of e-learning in the study of geography to promote global education.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on globalization and school-centred innovation theories. Globalization theory according to Robertson in Agbiogwu (2012:93) is "an accelerated compression of the contemporary world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a singular entity". Accordingly, the compression makes the world a single place by virtue of the power of a set of globally diffused ideas, which make other societal and ethnic identities and traditions irrelevant, except with reference to the global trend. Again, the study is also hinged on school-centred innovation theory of Blenkin; Gwyn, and Kelly (1975), who posits that for any substantial and lasting change to take place in the education system, an active involvement of the practitioners should be considered. As a result, the relevance of e-learning in the study of geography to enhance global education is x-rayed in this paper as it is connected to globalization and school-centred innovation theories.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research Design: The study used a descriptive survey design to elicit information from the respondents. According to Nworgu (2006), the descriptive survey design is most appropriate when a survey involves describing certain variables in relation to a given population.

Area of the Study: The area of study was South-East States of Nigeria popularly called the "Ibo States" with teeming population of youths who are thirsty for knowledge especially in this era of globalization.

Population/Sample and Sampling Technique: The population of the study was 1,241, made up of 61 lecturers and 1,180 students in the Departments of Geography in

Government-owned Universities in the South-East States of Nigeria. The sample size for the study was 366; 61 lecturers and 305 students of geography departments. All the 61 lecturers were involved in the study because their population was small. On the other hand, YaroYamene Technique for a finite population was used to draw the students' sample size of 305 for the study.

Instrumentation: A twenty-two (22) item questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection titled: "Relevance of E-Learning in the Study of Geography to Promote Global Education" The instrument was structured on a 4-point scale weighted thus: Strongly Agree (SA) =4 points; Agree (A) =3 points; Disagree (D) =2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1point with criterion mean of 2.50. The instrument was face validated by three experts in Measurement and Evaluation, and four experts in Curriculum and Teaching from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki-Nigeria. Its reliability was also determined and the data obtained was subjected to the test of reliability using Cronbach Alpha, and it yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.92, which was considered high enough for the instrument to be reliable.

Administration Procedure/Analysis Pattern: Three hundred and sixty-six (366) copies of the questionnaire were personally administered to the students and 350 copies were properly filled and returned that were used for the study (48 copies from the lecturers and 302 copies from the students). Any item with a mean rating of 2.50 and above was accepted as a role e-learning playsto enhance globalization. The data collected were analyzed descriptively using means and standard deviations to answer the research questions, while 't'- test of independent samples was used to test the only null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05.

RESULTS

The respondents affirmed that e-learning has significant roles to play in the study of geography in this era of globalization as can be seen in Table 1. Specifically, item 1 on clearer appreciation of one's own environment and beyond scored means of 3.23 and 3.42 for lecturers and students respectively. Item 2 was on greater commitment created in the study of naturalphenomena in the immediate and remote environments which recorded means of 2.98 and 3.36 for lecturers and students respectively. Furthermore, items 3, 4, 5 and 6 were based on: opening a world of life-long upgrading of geography knowledge; enhancement of asynchronous interaction between lecturers and students world-wide; creation of geography resource materials and promotion of navigational opportunities which foster effective teaching and learning of geography concepts, with mean scores of 3.38/3.46; 3.04/3.35; 3.35/3.40 and 3.33/3.36 for lecturers and students respectively.

Table 1 presents the data that answered research questions 1 and 2.

Table 1: Opinion pool of lecturers and students on the relevance of e-learning in the study of geography in Nigerian universities, to promote global education.

S/N	Relevance of e-learning in the study of geography to promote global education:	LECTURERS n = 48			STUDENTS n=302		
		\bar{X}	SD	Dec	\bar{X}	SD	Dec
1.	Leads to the development of greater commitment towards natural phenomena in the immediate and remote environment.	2.23	0.75	SA	3.42	0.73	SA
2.	Leads to a clearer appreciation of one's environment and beyond	2.98	0.91	A	3.36	0.75	SA
3.	Opens up a world of life-long upgrading of geography knowledge and its acquisition	3.38	0.67	SA	3.46	0.70	SA
4.	Enhances thoughtful conversation through its asynchronous interaction (one's own time) between learners and teachers in its world-wide network	3.04	0.82	A	3.35	0.72	S.A
5.	Creates a wealth of geography teaching and learning resources that are readily available globally.	3.35	0.76	S.A.	3.40	0.73	S.A.
6.	Promotes navigational opportunities which foster effective study of geographical phenomena globally	3.33	0.66	S.A.	3.36	0.70	S.A.
7.	Facilitates the exploration of real life implications of geography theories and models	3.02	0.86	A.	3.32	0.78	S.A
8.	Empowers learners to engage in healthy geography competition globally.	3.31	0.72	S.A.	3.45	0.71	S.A.
9.	Leads to the development of geography teaching teams and circles that can collaborate on field work projects of interest globally.	3.27	0.89	S.A.	3.37	0.75	S.A.
10.	Makes it easy for geography teachers and students to study and research at anytime and anywhere.	3.54	0.54	S.A.	3.65	0.69	S.A.
11.	Facilitates easier searching of geography materials in the digital space	3.40	0.79	S.A.	3.60	0.70	S.A.
12.	Enhances the development of deep love for, and connection with people/phenomena of other lands.	3.04	0.79	S.A.	3.60	0.70	S.A.
13.	Makes it easier for geography teachers and students to browse a wide range of geography information.	3.42	0.68	S.A.	3.55	0.66	S.A.
14.	Facilitates deep interaction among geography students globally.	3.25	0.73	S.A.	3.44	0.73	S.A
15.	Enhances active creation and exploration of geographic knowledge in diverse ways.	3.21	0.82	S.A.	3.36	0.70	S.A
16.	Creates cooperating teaching teams in geography, and removes phenomenal study isolation globally.	3.02	0.81	A.	3.16	0.81	S.A.
17.	Opens up unique opportunities for geography students to share their discoveries with other students globally.	3.31	0.66	S.A.	3.48	0.68	S.A.
18.	Facilitates the development of deductive thinking that leads to problem solving involving geography concepts.	3.06	0.86	A.	3.25	0.80	S.A.
19.	Makes the organization of field work in geography easier.	2.83	0.93	A.	3.16	0.86	S.A.
20.	Creates cooperating teaching teams in geography, and removes phenomenal study isolation globally.	2.65	0.86	A.	3.06	0.94	A.
21.	Makes it easy to gather remote geographic data within the immediate environment for study.	3.15	0.90	S.A.	3.45	0.74	S.A.
22.	Facilitates easy exploration of good avenues to compress the vast geography content to suit the learners.	3.27	0.89	S.A.	3.34	0.75	S.A.
Grand mean=		3.18			3.40		

Note: S.A = Strongly Agree; A. = Agree; D=Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

Items 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 in Table 1 above were framed to elicit responses based on e-learning facilitating the exploration of real life implications of geographic theories and models; empowering learners to engage in healthy geography competitions globally; making it easy to develop study teams/circles to collaborate on field work projects globally; enabling geography teachers and students to study and research at anytime and anywhere and facilitating the search for geography materials/phenomena in the digital space with mean scores of: 3.02/3.33; 3.37/3.45; 3.27/3.37; 3.54/3.65, and 3.40/3.60 for lecturers and students respectively. Again, items 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 were roles e-learning play thus: development of deep love for people/phenomena of other lands; allowing geography teachers and students to browse with ease, wide spectrum of geographic information; creation of deep interaction among geography students; enhancing active creation and exploration of geographic knowledge in diverse forms and creation of active study circles for students which helps them to overcome boredom and isolation, recording means of 3.04/3.23; 3.42/3.55; 3.25/3.44; 3.21/3.36, and 3.02/3.16 for lecturers and students respectively.

Furthermore, items 17, 18 19 and 20 sought to find out roles e-learning play as follows: unique opportunities created for geography students to share their discoveries with the other students globally; enhancing the development of deductive thinking/problem solving involving geography concept development and making the organization of field works and its execution in geography easier with means of: 3.31/3.48; 3.06/3.25; 2.83/3.16 and 2.65/3.06 respectively for the lecturers and students. Finally, items 21 and 22 were based on e-learning roles of: easy gathering of geographic data for teaching and learning and making it easy for geography teachers to explore good avenues to compress the vast nature of geography contents to suit learners which recorded means of 3.15/3.45 and 3.27/3.34 respectively for lecturers and students. On the whole, the geography lecturers and students believe as can be seen in items 1-22 of Table 1 that e-learning is relevant in the study of geography in Nigerian universities to enhance globalization.

Table 2 presents the data that tested the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05.

Table 2: t-test analysis on the opinion pool of lecturers and students on the relevance of e-learning in the study of geography in Nigerian universities to promote global education.

Item focus	Status	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Relevance of e-learning in the study of geography in Nigerian universities to promote global education	Lecturers	48	3.18	0.815	348	1.705	0.197	Not Significant
	Students	302	3.40	0.776				

Table 2 shows the t-test analysis of geography lecturers' and students' views on the relevance of e-learning in the study of geography in Nigerian universities to promote

global education. The 'sig' value as seen in the table above is 0.197 at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule is: If the 2-tailed 'sig' value is less than 0.05 level, reject the null hypothesis, but if it is greater than the 0.05 level, then the null hypothesis is accepted. A look at Table 2 above shows that the significant value' is 0.197 which is greater than the 0.05 level. So the hypothesis is upheld that there is no significant difference between the mean opinions of the lecturers and the students on the relevance of e-learning in the study of geography in Nigerian universities, This finding again confirms that geography lecturers and the students are optimistic that e-learning plays significant roles in the study of geography in this era of globalization.

DISCUSSION

The study findings so far showed that the university lecturers and students are optimistic that e-learning plays significant roles in the study of geography in Nigerian universities in this era of globalization. Again Abidonye & Fakodunde (2015) added that electronic learning technologically mediates learning using computers, whether from a distance or in face to face classroom setting. Again, Nwokike in Ikechukwu and Njoku (2014) noted that e-learning allows for efficient transfer of knowledge anywhere and anytime, regardless of subject matter. This opens up a world of learning available globally.

This was obvious as the 22 items scored above the determinant mean of 2.50. The study findings is backed up by the views of Rees, Mackay, Martins, Conole and Davis (2008) who posited that e-learning is the application of advanced learning technology that is computer based, that makes delivery of lesson flexible, interactive and long lasting. Eya (2006) again reiterated that e-learning is the largest and the most challenging application of ICT in the delivery of education.

Items 1; 2; 3; 4; 5 and 6 were based on clearer appreciation of one's own environment and beyond; greater commitment created in the study of natural phenomena in the immediate and remote environment; opening a world of life-long upgrading of geography knowledge; enhancement of asynchronous interaction between lecturers and students world-wide; creation of geography resource materials and promotion of navigational opportunities which foster effective teaching and learning of geography concepts. These findings were in line with the view point of Sharan in Adebayo (2012) when he stated that e-learning creates an opportunity for cooperative learning, which is an approach of organizing classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences. The author reiterated that this involves students working in groups to achieve set goals. Lending more credence to the findings, Alumode (2013) reiterated that e-learning has enhanced group collaborations, asynchronous interaction, discovering of new educational approach, and to access programmes anywhere and at any time in the world. According to Olofo et al, (2012) and (Amit) 2015), e-learning synchronous online technology include: video-conferencing, webcasts, interactive learning models and telephone conferencing, virtual worlds and chat rooms which enhance geographic studies

Furthermore, items 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13;14;15 and 16 were framed to elicit responses based on e-learning thus: facilitating exploration of real life implications of geographic theories and models; empowering learners to engage in healthy geography competitions globally; making it easy to develop study teams/circles to collaborate on field work projects globally; enabling geography teachers and students to study and research at anytime and anywhere, and facilitating the search for geography materials/phenomena in the digital space; development of deep love for people/phenomena of other lands; allowing geography teachers and students to browse with ease, wide spectrum of geographic information; creation of deep interaction among geography students; enhancing active creation and exploration of geographic knowledge in diverse forms and creation of active study circles for students which helps them to overcome boredom and isolation. These items as can be seen in Table 1 were scored high as roles e-learning play in the study of geography to enhance global education and the creation of awareness of planet-earth.

Accordingly, these findings were supported by the observations of Naidoo (2003) when he stated that e-learning provides direct interaction between teachers and students of varied background across the globe, as they discuss current geographic events. Again the findings were in line with the position of Villanueva (2000) when he stated that teachers and their students through the internet pathways of e-learning, gain access to the world of academic concepts, principles and theories posted online. He emphasized that with e-learning, learners have more positive attitude towards schooling and their motivation are increased tremendously. Also the findings agrees with the discoveries of Rees *et al* (2008) who explained that e-learning creates new possibilities for collaborations in the development of e-learning materials and other projects within and across institutions.

Finally, in Table one, items 17; 18; 19; 20; 21 and 22 sought to find out the relevance of e-learning as follows: unique opportunities for geography students to share their discoveries with the other students globally; enhancing the development of deductive thinking/problem solving involving geography concept development and making the organization of field works and its execution in geography easier; easy gathering of geographic data for teaching and learning and making it easy for geography teachers to explore good avenues to compress the vast nature of geography content to suit learners.

The items received favourable responses and the observations of Mitchell (2007) backed up these findings when he posited that e-learning provides diverse hypermedia and multimedia kits that help students to develop critical thinking as they study and analyse geographic phenomena. The author stated that with the webcam effect of e-learning, various geographic phenomena are brought within a geographic space, thus making their study stress-free and manageable. Mitchell further pointed out that e-learning offers geographers the potential of accurate measurement, making way for precision and up-to-date study of phenomena in their locations.

CONCLUSION

E-learning is a veritable tool in the study of geography in Nigerian universities to promote global education as can be seen from the study findings. The 22 items scored above the determinant mean of 2.50, which include among others: clearer appreciation of one's own environment and beyond; greater commitment created in the study of natural phenomena in the immediate and remote environment; opening a world of life-long upgrading of geography knowledge; enhancement of asynchronous interaction between lecturers and students world-wide; creation of geography resource materials and promotion of navigational opportunities which foster effective teaching and learning of geography concepts.

Educational Implications of the Study

The findings of the study showed that the geography lecturers and the students strongly agree that e-learning is a veritable tool in the study of geography in this era of globalization. As a result, they are ready to reposition the study through e-learning. It then implies that if universities put machinery in place, the study of geography as a global process would be made a lot easier.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the implications drawn, the following recommendations are made:

- There is the urgent need for the Federal Government of Nigeria to beef up e-learning facilities in the Nigerian universities for its effective application in teaching and learning;
- Concerned university authorities need to train/re-train geography lecturers and students on the proper techniques of e-learning in geographic studies and how best to form collaborative teams for easy monitoring of geographical phenomena across the globe;
- Universities across the country need to put in place, technical support to man the electronic equipment in order to have a hitch-free communication and interaction globally;
- Universities need to support geography authorities to develop study teams to collaborate on relevant/urgent programmes, on how to monitor and regulate the activities of man on earth, as the present climate change being experienced presently, is a pointer to man's negative interaction with planet-earth, and
- E-learning is power-driven; As a result, the Federal Government of Nigeria needs to back up power supply to the nation's institutions to guarantee the success of e-learning applications in teaching and learning.

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