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The use of blogs and microblogs in Education

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Abstract

Advancement in information and communication technology (ICT) has empowered the world's economy and advanced the educational achievement for development. The role of information and communication technology and the educational system is vital in keeping up with the rapid change in technology. In this regard, the federal ministry of education in Nigeria created an ICT department in 2007 in order to fully implement the introduction and the role of ICT in our school system. Thus, the paper examines the use of blogs and microblogs as instructional tool for teaching and learning process in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigerian education system, ICT, Blogs and Microblogs

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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important needs for the well-being of an individual. For nation to progress in an excellent direction, it must ensure that its citizens have access to qualitative education to contribute to the growth and development of both self and the nation. Advances in information and communication technology has transformed the world' economy solely empowered by ICT. Most developed countries in the globe are advanced in ICT. Hence the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in the 21st century in the education the education system is vital to keep up with the rapidly changing technologies. In response to this, the ministry of education created its ICT department in February 2007, which was lately reviewed in May 2019 in order to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the Educational sector.

BLOG AND MICROBLOG

Blog is a web page that contains informational posts by one or multiple users, often related to a specific topic. It is an informational webpage or website consisting of discrete, informal-style entries publishes on World Wide Web or links to other websites without character limitation that means it can be as lengthy as possible. Blogs are updated on regular basis to suit its purpose. Examples of blogs are Facebook, etc.

Microblog on the other hand is a form of blogging combined with instant messaging wherein the messages are restricted to specific character counts. Microblogs are software or applications that allow users to exchange small elements of contents such as short sentences, individual images or video links (Kaplan & Heinlein 2001). In Micro-blogging, users can distribute short messages using a variety of platforms, including instant messaging software, SMS messages on mobile phones, websites, browser plug-ins or stand-alone programs (Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng, 2007). It refers to short messages or posts shared with an audience online through microblogging platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr. They are brief and straight to the point as it has characters limitation. It is used to share pictures, write posts, upload clips and videos and send GIF's to another account. Both blogs and microblogs fall within a broad category of websites that are often called Web 2.0.

Blogging has become an increasingly important instructional tool in education. The globe is now operating as a digital world. The effects of blogs and objectives cannot be underrated. Beyond reading and writing new online literacies are being used to effectively communicate using online text, imagery, sound and video is increasingly essential in today's rapidly changing society (Alvermann, 2008). It is highly important for teachers to introduce blogging to develop activities that encourage students' ability to self-expression and exhibit highly-order thinking.

There are various ways to use blogging teaching and learning process. One can use an existing blog as an instructional tool to provide informational insight, classroom management, collaboration, discussions, and having comprehensive archived portfolios (Hashemi & Azizinezhad, 2011). It encourages learner to learner and instructor to learner interaction (Luo & Franklin 2015). It has been widely acknowledged that web tools "enable hybrid learning spaces that travel across physical and cyber space" (Greehow et al.., 2004) through students' attendance and participation in an online environments.

Microblog tools have been effectively used not only strictly to classroom activities but it serves as an extension as it is flexible to outside the classroom setting. It is a unique tool which incorporates students into various learning scenarios. For example: Twitter is a

microblog which provides text content with no more than 140 character in a single post called Tweet which is displayed on the users profile page and create communities for interaction and discussions. Luo and Franklin (2015) identified several types of classrooms and after classes learning supported by microblogging tools:

A Formal learning: blogging serves as assistance for students to catch-up with the classroom progress as it provides visual and audio contents.

B Informal learning: by reading, commenting and discussing the content of the blog, students tend to express themselves better and learn from responses by the tutor and others.

C Learning community: the learning community continues to be active after the classroom session has ended as it enables the tutor and students to continue discussion on the subject matter after classroom tutorials.

Social presence: Dunlap and Lowenthal (2010) in Luo and Franklin 2015 found out that students were more engaged in information sharing, brainstorming, problem solving and context based content creation through microblogging.

The use of blogs and microblogs in instructional purposes in Nigeria is still in its infancy stage. There is currently shortage in ICT facilities in Nigerian tertiary institutions which affects the use of technology in the process of teaching and learning as well, there have been a number of factors affecting the utilization of blogs and microblogs as instructional tools. Some of which includes:

A Inadequate computer trained instructors. Most personnel lack the skill to operate a computer and to utilize the internet

B. Irregular power supply: ICT equipment mostly operate with power supply. However in Nigeria, there has been lack of consistent power supply at National level.

C. Cost of equipment: ICT tools are still very expensive to acquire which makes it difficult to adopt their use in tertiary institutions.

D. Lack of internet or slow connectivity

In conclusion, one of the major tasks of teaching today is to encourage students to improve digital competence so that they to adapt into the modern community. Therefore, measures should be taken in order to develop the use of blogs and microblogs in schools. Below are some of the recommendations:

A. Instructors should be exposed to seminars and conferences to make them conversant with the use of such tools

B. Education stake holders must ensure that internet is accessible to both instructors and students

C. Computers and Mobile phones should be given at discounted rates to both teachers and students

D. Source of power supply should be diversified by the use of generators or solar systems.

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