

LITERACY LEVEL AND ACCESS RATE OF THE NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGY AMONG LECTURERS OF THE FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC MUBI: A RE-APPRAISAL OF KNOWLEDGE THEORY.

BY

LINUS KEVIN GADZAMA,

*Mass Communication Department, Federal Polytechnic Mubi,
Adamawa State and Visitor Adamawa State University Mubi*

MARY ANTHONY NDIJIDA,

*Mass Communication Department, Federal Polytechnic Mubi,
Adamawa State*

HAJARA UMARU AMUA,

*Mass Communication Department, Federal Polytechnic Mubi,
Adamawa State*

ABSTRACT

Knowledge gap is occasioned by the literacy level of polytechnic lecturers on the use of new media while digital divide is brought about by the lack of fund and access to state-of-the-art internet and satellite network necessary for the use of the new media for teaching, and learning. People all over the world, must be constantly updated on the latest innovations in the global media technologies and they must attune themselves to the acquisition and use of these technologies so that they become more relevant in the ever-changing world of communication. This study examined the literacy level and access rate of lecturers of the federal polytechnic Mubi lecturers to new media technologies. The study assessed how well lecturers of the Federal Polytechnic Mubi knew about and the actual usage of the new media technologies in learning and research. A survey of lecturers in federal polytechnic Mubi was done. The sample random technique was applied to get the sample size of this study. The study founded out that 45% of lecturers of Federal Polytechnic Mubi lectures have access to the technologies and learning. The remaining 55% know about the new media technology but didn't apply them in teaching and learning. Computer and mobile phones were the most used of the new technologies, while others such as video conferencing etc. were used by the lecturers. Also, inadequate knowledge, lack of periodic orientation on the latest innovations, and high cost of this technology constitute the constraints to the acquisition of the new media by the lecturers. The study recommended that polytechnics should train and retain their lecturers, on the use and application of the new media in teaching and learning. Again, Polytechnics should make the technologies very affordable by partnering with the government to subsidize the cost of these technologies. They should provide access to these technologies.

Keyword: *Literacy level, Access Rate, New Media.*

INTRODUCTION

Today, a lot of authors are updating their books to include on line editions. Nothing much may change in the book but it has been updated with an online edition. The need to do this is

driven by the fact that most of these authors are lectures (Teachers) in various fields who desire international recognition.

Webometric system of ranking universities is equally one way of driving lecturers to update their works to include online editions. Since webometric judges the universities web presence, the academic staff of the university has the job of improving their web presence. Professors and other members of the academic environment are encouraged to create a website and upload their academics works online. The polytechnics and mono-technics can also take the same footsteps. It is not just to have their work online, but the quality of the things they have online equally matters. Things like, the richness of the polytechnic's websites and the richness of the works of their academic staff on the web.

Also, most universities in the world today develop and update their websites to meet the growing standard of universities. Universities without an up to date websites is regarded as backward. From the university's websites, one should be able to view all programmes offered by the university. From the websites, one should be able to apply to any university of choice, after viewing the necessary things the websites have to offer the programme.

The Federal polytechnic Mubi has to be part of this global trend of events. They have to update themselves by educating their teaching staff (especially) on the use of the new media of communication for teaching and learning. If the world of today is regarded as knowledge age, why then are we reluctant to embrace the knowledge that will help put us in time with our contemporaries. It is time to welcome the changes that have come to us by giving the lecturers the knowledge and also granting or creating access to the very means that will make it possible for them to use the knowledge acquired.

Webometrics is the ranking web of world universities. It is an initiative of the cybermetrics lab, a research group which is part of the national research council (NRC) which is also the largest public research body in Spain.

Cybermetrics lab is devoted to quality analysis of the internet and web contents especially those related to the processes of generation and scholarly communication of scientific knowledge.

The original aim of the raking was to promote the publication, because of emphasis is now laid on the web. It is based on the global performance and visibilities of these universities. It shows many activities of these universities. professors and the activities of research. Web publication is cheaper and it is encouraged by the process because it maintains and reaches much longer potential readers. According to webometrics (2011:2)

We intend to motivate both institutions and scholars to have a web presence that reflect accurately their activities if the web performance of an institution is below the expected position according to their academic excellence, university authorities should reconsider their web policy, promoting substantial increases of the volume and quality of their electronic publication.

This is what prompted the researcher to seek to measure the literacy level and access rate of these new media among lecturers of Federal Polytechnic Mubi in order to suggest ways of improving the polytechnic academic status. When we say the new media, we mean all those technologies that have been now accepted as media which was not possible in the past. The distinction between old and new media is not exactly clear to some people. To some, old media are typewriters, magnetic tapes which use analog system. To some others, the old media are

traditional media of print (newspaper and magazines) and broadcasting (Radio and Television). While the first group regards radio and television as the new media, the second group regards all the processes of digitalization and computer mediated communication associated with the internet as the new media. They regard the internet as a meeting point of the new media.

Now, the computer and the internet are just showing a new way of doing old things through some means that some thought was never possible. In this way, those “old” things are done faster and easier, Wikipedia states, “the term then became far more widely used as the mass consumer internet began to emerge from 1995 onwards. The term ‘new media’ can be traced to the 70s it is only within the last 25 years that the term has taken on a more advanced meaning.” (2011:4)

In 1984, Rice defined the new media as communication technologies that enable or facilitate user interactivity between user and information. (Quoted in Schorr & Campbell, 2003:4).

Digital revolution has given birth to some kind of flue in the media world. Ukouu (2008:53) avers that those who delivered newspapers or what then passed for one-on horsebacks in the 16th century; the wonders of today’s advances in communication technology would have seemed the plot of a science fiction. News and information have moved from the pace of horse to the speed of light, global announcements to tools of international power struggle and image making.

This revolution has brought the replacement of traditional means of communication and what it offers such as, the internet replacing the one to many models of traditional mass communication with the possibility of a many-to-many’ web of communication. Any individuals with the appropriate technology can produce his or her online media and include images, text and sound about whatever he or she chooses (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:303).

In this way the new media and its technological influx have shifted and are more gradually reshaping the way we interact and communicate in the society. Flew (2002:13) supports the above view on interactivity and the new media thus; “interactivity can be considered as a central concept in understanding new media, but different media forms possess different degree of interactivity”

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Even with the introduction of digital technology, the so-called old media have equally been upgraded. It has gone through some kind of transformation. The new media are only modifying the old media or doing old things in an entirely new way. Therefore, the capacity or ability to follow the trend of change in the media world creates a gap and the problem of this research.

The new media coming together in one source called the internet makes it possible for the media to do previously unimaginable things in a short time this has turned the world from a global village to a global family.

Computer related internet-based communication have become the way of life in the industrialized world. The way people communicate has been drastically changed. The new media technologies have been highly integrated into their industry and education system. This is given teaching and learning a new face.

Despite the prevalence of the new media technology, in our society today the level of knowledge, access, and use in teaching and learning among lecturer’s is yet to be determined.

This is what necessitated this present study on the level of knowledge and access rate of the new media technology among lecturers of Federal polytechnic Mubi.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were used to guide this work:

1. What do the lecturers of Federal Polytechnic Mubi know about the new media of communication technology?
2. What is the level of awareness of the new media technology among lecturers of Federal Polytechnic Mubi?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study is limited to Federal Polytechnic Mubi only. It observed literacy level and access rate of the new media technology among the lecturers.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The review of this study was based on the following sub-topics:

- a. The new media of communication technology
 - b. Digital divide
 - c. New Media technology and learning
- A. The New Media Technology

What counts as new media is often debated and is also dependent on the definitions used. New media could be seen simply as all the information and communication technology.

Flew (2002:11) connected the new media to globalization when he said that “as a result of the evolution of new media technologies, globalization occurs” Crotean and Hoyres (2003:311) concur “New media radically break the connection between physical locations much less significant for our social relationships” what this means is that the new media help in the advancement of a global village. In other words, new media technologies are powerful drive or a determining factor in the process of globalization. Through the new media, the world becomes a global village and people life behind are connected all over the world.

While some scholars believe that technology drives the society, just as in the above suggestion, Castells (1996:5) speaks of a “soft determine whereby he contends that, ‘technology does not determine society, nor does society script the course of technological change, since many factors, including individuals investment and entrepreneurialism, intervene in the process of scientific discovery, technological innovation and social application, so the final outcome depends on a complex pattern of interaction; Inghideia (2010:8) talks about technological determination in this ways “The revolution still affect some countries earlier than it will be others. For ICT to weave its magic, it must find a hospitable social and political environment. New technologies threaten existing power and economic relationship, and those that benefit from the old relationships, put up barriers to the spread of new technologies.” Debora Sper (2011:11) concludes that “life along the technological frontier moves through four distinct phases: innovation, commercialization, creating Anarchy and rules.”

What the above arguments means is that society changes are instigated by technological development, which quickly brings to mind the thesis of Marshal McLuhan (1997) *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*. McLuhan portrays the media to the extent of their

perceptual interaction with people. Little joke (1988:255) Quotes “It is important to realize that Mc Luhan’s use of participation or involvement does not refers to the degree of interest of time spent attending to a particular medium of communication. Rather he refers to the completeness (hot) or incompleteness (cool) of the stimulus” in other words, to the extent a median interacts with the hetman society depends on the development of the technology.

B. Digital Divide

The term digital divide came into regular usage in the mid-90s. The then president of the United States Bill Clinton and his Vice President Al Gore used the term in a 1996 speech in Knoxville (Inollians,2002), though the term has appeared in several articles and political speeches as early as 1995. Larry Irring, a former United States head of National Telecommunication Infrastructure Administration (NTIA) at the Department of Commerce, Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Technology, Adviser to the Clinton Administration, noted that a series of NTIA surveys (1995), (1998), (1999) and (2000) were “Catalysis for the popularity, ability and redefinition of term, and he used the term in a series of letter reports.

Digital divide, according to Sonacke (2004:42) is a term that is often used in describing disparities in access to, and usage of, the telephones personal computers and internet across demographic groups, within the same country or between countries. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) defines digital divide as “The division between countries and people within countries who have real access to new media technologies and are using it effectively, and those who do not” (Quoted in Gurstein, 2003:13). African countries provide a perfect example of this divide within a country and between countries.

Echoing the above definitions Wilson (2004:199), defines the term digital divide as a perceived inequality in access to, distribution, of information technology between two or more populations. From the foregoing, digital divide includes the imbalances in the resources and knowledge required to effectively participate in this digitals age. Little wonders Mehra (2004:782) sees digital divide as “the troubling gap between those who use computers and the internet and those who do not”

Providing a different view is Compaine (2001:133-134), he argues that: The term digital divide connotes gap in the ownership of, or regular access to, a computer, as internet access come it was seen as a central aspect of computing, the term’s usage sighted to encompass gaps in not just computers but also access to internet. Recently, some have used the term to refer to gaps in broadband network access. The term can mean not only unequal access to computer hardware, but also inequalities between groups of people in the ability to use information technology fully.

The above definition throws more light to the different areas and degrees to which digital divide could be ascribed. In other words, digital divide is not only on how it could be ascribe. In other words, digital divide is not only on the possession of computer accessories and internet services but it includes other things like knowledge of computer and the resources to acquire them. Where we look at access to computer hardware and access to the internet, we equally see the lack of resources and knowledge to even use computer and the internet.

C. New Media Technology and Learning

Within the literature of researchers and theorists concerning the effectiveness of, using technology to help student learn. Generally speaking, there is an assumption that technology makes learning faster by its merely use in the educational process.

Ehrmann (1999:32) sums up this assumption very likely, technologies such as computers (pencils) don't have predetermined impacts; it's their uses that influences outcomes. This statement seems obvious, but many institutions act as though the mere presence of technology will improve learning; the use of computer to teach the same things in the same ways as before, yet they expect learning outcome to be better. However, not all researchers, evaluators, or theorists agree that, simply the presence of computers can improve learning. As such, two camps have been formed in regard to this issue.

Richard Clark is probably the most outspoken researchers who argue against the view that the media by themselves influences the learning process. In his ground breaking away, Clark (1983:445) said succinctly, "media are mere vehicles that deliver instruction but do not influence students' achievement any more than the truck that delivers our grocery causes changes in our nutrition," in essence, Clark believes that media do not help student to learn in any circumstances.

In contract to Clark's argument, Kozma (1994:7) believes that the more appropriate question was not whether media influences learning, but will they influence learning. He also contended to that simply because we have not established a relationship between media that one does not exist; he believed that, we have yet to measure it, and the failure to establish this relationship is caused in part by our theories of learning or more specifically, behaviorism with its basic assumption that a stimulus causes responses. Therefore, if the stimulus is not present, there is no possibility for response.

Kozma (1994:8) explains that in Clark's view media technologies are simply mere vehicles "or conduits for an instructional methods (Stimulus) that elicit a response (learning). Kozman argues that learning is a much complex process than just series of stimuli-response connections. In his view learning it defined as "an active, constructive, cognitive and social process by which the learner strategically manages available cognitive, physical, and social resources to create new knowledge by interacting with information in the environment and integrating it with information already stored in the memory". From the foregoing, Kozman definition of learning has involved or embodied more of a constructive process, our measurement of the process must involve as well.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theories that best explain this study are the knowledge gap theory and diffusion innovation theory. This is because their basic tenets or assumptions are fundamental to the understanding of the research problem under study. Another reason is that, since the study is on the knowledge of a new advancement in technology and its integration into the society, knowledge gap theory and the diffusion of this technology theory is apt to this study.

Knowledge gap theory was first proposed by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien at the University of Minnesota in the 70s. They believed that the increase of information in the society is not evenly acquired by every member of the society. Weng (2002:12) portends that "people with higher socio-economic status tend to have greater ability to acquire information". This automatically leads to a division of two groups; group of data educated people who know more about most things; and those with low education who know less.

Rogers and Shoemaker (1973:21) developed the diffusion of innovation theory, which explained how new ideas or innovation are disseminated and adopted at the community and popular levels. Rogers defined “relative advantage” as the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes.

METHOD

The research adopted the survey method of research. This is because it is testing the opinion of the audience over an issue that affects their profession. The research is seeking to know the literacy level and access rate of the new media technologists among Federal Polytechnic Mubi lecturers as it concerns teaching and learning.

Surveys according to Bittner (1996:441) “can measure such things as public attitude opinions, and behavior, in a more detailed and in-depth manner than public opinion polls”. This study was undertaken through a pilot survey of the total population of study.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The technique applied to get the sample size is the simple random sampling technique. A total of 33 departments were randomly picked by lecturers and those departments that were picked constituted the unit of analysis.

New Media and Social Behaviour of Lecturers in the Federal Polytechnic Mubi

Awareness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	25	20.8
Average	45	29.2
High	50	50.0
Total	120	100

Source: Field survey 2020.

Table 1 above shows that 50 respondents (50.0%) were highly aware of new media, 45 respondents (29.2%) had average level of awareness while 25 respondents (20.8%) had low awareness.

FINDINGS

Some of the respondents have fair knowledge of new media technologists, especially the internet, laptop computer and mobile telephone. The internet facilities and mobile telephone infrastructure are available in few areas of the Federal Polytechnic Mubi. Also, some of the academic staff make use of the new media technologists for wide range of digital activities ranging from information and communication exchange, entertainment to academic research.

However, there is still gap in access to the new media technologies among the lecturers, especially in respect of the requisite skills and knowledge. More so, inadequate knowledge, lack of periodic orientation of the over involving new media technologists and lack media exposure constitute the main constraints to the lecturer’s acquisition of new media knowledge world. They should do this by training and retraining their lecturers who will in turn train their students on the technologies that power the knowledge society. In other words, something like information literacy programme could be incorporated in the polytechnic curriculum.

Following the provision of this knowledge internet access should be made free for all and access to computers and laptops should be made really affordable. This will then be the case of placing the ball on the court for the lecturers to start playing. Concurring with the above is UNESCO (2002:5) “Keeping pace with technological development and changing competencies required of both students and their teachers require a state of the art curricula and appropriate capacity building” the appeal of the above quote is that Nigerian Polytechnic lectures need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge for using the new media technologies in teaching their students.

CONCLUSION

Chinua Achebe (1964:45) in his epic novel *Arrow of God* said it through the voice of Ezeulu, “This world is changing, (do not like it I shall send one of my sons to the white men “to be my eye...”. Even the ordinary chief priest in the colonial era saw the speed of the changing world and wanted to be on board by sending one of his sons. The complexities of the changes brought about by the new media of communication technology are such that we cannot just overlook. In fact, we even become part of it, no matter the degree of our participation, involuntarily.

The new communication media technology puts us on board of this very fast-moving train. Today, due to so many means of gaining knowledge and acquiring information, information became stale almost as soon as it is acquired.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing of the findings of this study the following recommendations are very pertinent:

- i. The world is changing and it is information that brought this change. Therefore, Nigerian polytechnic should position themselves to be able to gather, process, and consume this information with the same speed as others from the western world.
- ii. In this way, the Polytechnic authorities should endeavor to make access to the new media technologies available to its staff especially the lecturers and students to enable them participate effectively in this our knowledge-based society.

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