
AN EVALUATION OF THE AVAILABILITY AND UTILIZATION OF THE INTERNET IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN PANKSHIN LGA, PLATEAU STATE

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Abstract

This study evaluated the availability and utilization of the internet in public and private secondary schools in Pankshin Local Government Area (LGA), Plateau State. The researcher employed mixed-methods approach in the collection of data; the data were collected from 10 public and 10 private secondary schools through surveys and interviews with students, teachers, and administrators. Findings reveal significant disparities in internet access and usage between public and private institutions, with private schools demonstrating higher availability and more effective utilization of internet resources. The researcher used a total of 200 respondents, which comprised 100 teachers and 100 students from the selected schools for the purpose of this work. The researcher adapted simple percentage in analyzing the data collected from the respondents. The

results indicated that only 30% of public and 70% of private secondary schools have internet facilities. Most teachers (90%) and students (80%) in private secondary schools utilize the internet for educational purposes, while only 10% of teachers and 20% of students in public secondary schools do so. The main challenges faced by teachers and students in utilizing the internet for educational purposes include lack of internet facilities, slow internet speed, and high cost of internet subscription. The study recommended that Government, NGOs and other stakeholders should order for the provision of internet facilities and training for teachers/students in our schools in order to enhance the utilization of the internet for educational purposes.

Keywords: School Challenges, Internet, Students' needs

Introduction

The internet has become an essential tool for education, providing access to vast resources, information, and learning opportunities. The Nigerian government has recognized the importance of the internet in education and has made efforts to promote its use in schools. However, the availability and utilization of information and communication gadgets in public and private secondary schools in Pankshin LGA, Plateau State, have not been extensively studied. This study evaluates the availability and utilization of the internet in public and private secondary schools in Pankshin LGA, Plateau State. In the present-day educational system, information and communication technology makes the learning process become simple among the learners in our society. According to Akoko, (2021) the internet has an unending revolutionary impact on the educational process worldwide. He suggests that the internet has indeed moved the world into a global village such that any nation or enterprise that opts to remain an island would quickly cease to be relevant in this era. The internet is a montage of thousands of computer networks that cover the planet. The uses of the internet are enormous ranging from academic research, bridging the communication gap between developed and developing countries, linkage

with other institutions of the world, receipt of global information, and also assisting students to be computer literate. The internet is loaded with information that provides students with the opportunity to engage in somewhat challenging time activities. The internet is a worldwide, uniform computer network connecting millions of computers across the world. It is a network in which many computers voluntarily interconnect to exchange information in a fast, reliable, and effective manner. The internet can be said to have unifying powers among humans. It is a universal computer network where one can find a lot of information and communicate with other people all over the world. For instance, you can look for articles in other libraries from your computer and communicate with friends to actualize the goal of integration.

In the actualization of the goal of integration of ICT in our Education in Nigeria to light the global standards, government has made immense contributions into education by provisions of social services, infrastructure and training of teachers at the primary school level in order to meet present days. At the junior secondary school level, computer education is made a pre-vocational elective and a vocational elective at the senior secondary school. Also, the Federal Ministry of Education launched an ICT-driven project known as "School-net" which is intended to equip all schools in Nigeria with computers and communication techniques. To adequately provide ICT facilities to secondary schools, the Federal Government commissioned a

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Mobile Internet Unit [MIU] which is operated by the Nigerian National Informational Technology Development Agency [NITDA]. The MIU is a locally made bus that has been converted into a mobile training and Cyber Centre with ten work stations all networked and connected to the internet. It is also equipped with printers, photocopiers, and a number of multimedia facilities (Adaomi & Kpangban, 2010).

In line with today's challenges for the utilization of internet facilities by our educational sectors in its project, the statement of the former Minister of Science and Technology, Dr. Ogbonaya Onu, in his speech to Journalists on 15th March 2017, said that due to lack of funding and poor coordination of research and development in the country as major challenges confronting the advancement of technology in the country, he noted that efforts must be channeled towards repositioning science and technology for economic growth and internet to our schools from the local level in order to improve the educational sectors (Ndom, 2019).

Yusuf (2005) observed that internet access has profoundly influenced secondary education by enhancing learning, teaching, and research. Simond (2008) noted that the "Internet" cluster of technologies improves the educational process. With rapid advancements in ICT and decreasing computer costs, students now have affordable access to information in both print and online formats (Wee, 1999). Consequently, Doyle (1994) stressed the importance of individuals being able to access and utilize information from diverse sources, including computers and the internet. As a result, students increasingly rely on the internet for research and social media communication to fulfill their informational needs (Smith & Philips, 1999, cited in Akoko, 2021). In this context, students are equipping themselves with ICT skills relevant to society. The internet utilization has an impact positively impacting the academic performance of students in the region. Internet services play a crucial role in schools on the Plateau, particularly in facilitating student interactions and knowledge acquisition since the introduction of e-learning in the educational system. The Internet fosters collaboration among students and teachers, and the state government is working to mandate e-learning and internet services in all secondary schools in Plateau State. This initiative aims to support e-examinations, such as the Joint Admission Matriculation Board and Universal Tertiary Matriculation Examinations, as well as other computer-based tests in tertiary institutions globally.

Literature Review

The term internet is a global, decentralized, and open

system of interconnected computer networks that use the internet protocol to link devices worldwide, providing access to a vast array of information resources, services, and applications, such as email, file transfer protocol, online education services, etc. The internet has revolutionized communication, information access, and daily life, with a profound impact on modern society. The internet has been identified as a powerful tool for education, providing access to vast resources, information, and opportunities for learning (Kwacha, 2007). It has been shown to improve student engagement, motivation, and academic performance (Gulati, 2008). However, the availability and utilization of the internet in schools in Nigeria have been limited by factors such as lack of infrastructure, high cost of internet subscription, and inadequate training for teachers Nigerian Communications Commission, (2019).

The internet is a vast global network that links millions of computers ranging from the smallest handheld personal mobile digital assistants to the most powerful computer systems ever constructed. The power of the internet is that it allows a worldwide community comprising millions of people to communicate, access, and publish information. People are using the internet to gain access to libraries throughout the world, aid in research projects and cross-cultural studies, solve school assignments, enhance foreign language skills, and simply exchange ideas and studies with their peers. The internet has become a global cultural phenomenon; tens of millions of people have access to the system. It is of the same magnitude as television was in its early years and is the most powerful current trend for societal change. Abifarin, (2015) refers to the internet as a simple acronym for internetworking of computers. Moses (1999) as cited in Abifarin (2015) described the internet as a computer network through which computer users globally communicate effectively with one using the telephone.

Information Technology Encyclopedia (2001) in the same vein defines the internet as essentially a whole bunch of computers connected by wires which they can talk over. Ezomo (2006) asserts that internet is the gateway for libraries and information centers to enter the electronic information era and provides information generated by different organizations, institutes, research centers, and individuals all over the world. The internet is also conceived as a rich, multi-layered, complex, ever-changing textual environment. The internet is a globally interconnected set of computers through which information can be quickly accessed. Onatola (2004) as cited in Abifarin (2015) suggests that the internet has become an invaluable tool for learning, teaching, and research. Internet could be regarded as technology

evolving in furtherance of the concept of a paperless society. It is a super high-wave invention, which is already advancing the cause of humanity of the greatest height, especially in this millennium. The internet provides such facilities as Electronic Mail, Telnet, online searching, Electronic Publishing, User Group/Listen, Usenet, Archie, Gopher, File Transfer Protocol, Veronica, Mosaic, and World Wide Web (WWW). The internet also simply called "the Net" is a worldwide system of computer networks- a network of networks in which users at any one computer can, if they have permission, get information from any other computer (and sometimes talk directly to users at other computers). It was conceived by the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) of the U.S. government in 1969 and was first known as the ARPANET. The original aim was to create a network that would allow users of a research computer at one university to be able to "talk to" research computers at other universities (<http://searchwin.development.techtarget.com>) lifted on 29th June, 2019.

Previous studies have highlighted the uneven distribution of ICT resources in Nigerian secondary schools. For instance, Onobrakpor and Adewole-Odeshi (2020) found that despite national policies promoting ICT in education, many students exhibit limited knowledge and access to these technologies. Similarly, a study in Kaduna State revealed significant differences in the availability and utilization of instructional media in public and private schools, with private institutions having more resources and better utilization of internet or ICT.

The internet is a computer network made up of thousands of networks worldwide. No one knows exactly how many computers are connected to the internet. It is certain however that this number is in the millions and is increasing at a rapid rate. No one is in charge of the internet but there are organizations which develop technical aspects of this network and set standards for creating applications on it. The internet consists primarily of a variety of access protocols. Many of these protocols feature programmes that allow users to search for and retrieve materials made available by the protocol. The importance and usefulness of internet cannot be overemphasized. The National Policy on Education (2014), recognizes the prominent role of Information Communication Technology (internet) in the modern world today hence the integration of ICT in education in Nigeria

Teaching and Learning Gains through the Internet

Technology has introduced new methods of conducting research through online learning for natural development. Many developed countries have exploited

the potentials of technology to improve and transfer educational landscape in institutions of learning. But how effective has the students in these institutions avail themselves in the utilizations of these opportunities. Through the awareness created by ICT, students can feel more confident with the new technologies to improve their quality of education and increase the ease of access to information worldwide.

In some cases, students use the internet for things which are not academically profitable like watching pornographic pictures for fun, and to seek new friends. For those who seek it for academic purposes, it has enhanced their academic performance. The internet has made learning become easy through its utilization of ICT facilities in schools. Therefore, the benefits of internet facilities utilization to students are:

- i. It increases one's horizon.
- ii. It enlightens one's scope by divulging global information.
- iii. The novelty of workers with a computer raises the students' motivation.
- iv. Linking new learning in other institutions of the world.
- v. Bridging communication gap between developed and developing countries.
- vi. Research made easy.
- vii. Assist students to be computer literates

According to Vijay (2016), the utilization of the internet facilities in our day-to-day activities depends on personal goals. The internet provides data, information, and knowledge for the personal, social and economic development in educational system in the country.

Objectives of the Study

The broad aim of the study is to investigate the availability and extent of utilization of internet among public and private senior secondary school students in Pankshin Local Government Area, Plateau State. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Explore internet availability in public and private senior secondary school students in Pankshin L.G.A;
2. Ascertain the extent to which students utilize the internet for their studies;
3. Examine the barriers to the use of internet in public and private secondary schools in Pankshin L.G.A.
4. Explore ways student's utilization of internet for their studies can be improved.

Methodology

A survey research design was used for this study. A total of 200 respondents, comprising 100 teachers and 100

students, were selected from 10 public and 10 private secondary schools in Pankshin LGA using a stratified sampling technique. Data were collected using a

structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

Results

Table 1: Showing the availability of internet facilities in public and private secondary schools in Pankshin L.G.A.

Level of availabilities of internet facilities	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agreed	60	30	200	100
Disagreed	140	70	200	100
Total	200	100	200	100

Source: Field Questionnaire

Table 1 above indicates that 60 (30%) of the respondents agreed that there is availability of internet facilities in both public and private secondary schools in Pankshin L.G.A. of Plateau State while 140 (70%) of the

respondents were of the contrary view. This indicates that internet facilities are not adequate in both public and private secondary schools in Pankshin LGA of Plateau State.

Table 2: Showing the utilization of internet facilities in public and private secondary schools in Pankshin L.G.A. of Plateau State

Students Responses

Utilization of internet facilities	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agreed	20	20	20	20
Disagreed	80	80	80	80
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Field Questionnaire

Table 2 (a) revealed that 20 (20%) of the respondents agreed that there is utilization of internet facilities in public and private secondary schools in Pankshin L.G.A. Plateau State, while 80 (80%) had contrary opinion of the

utilization of the internet facilities in both public and private secondary schools in the local government area. This means that internet facilities in this area are not adequately utilized.

Teachers Responses

Utilization of internet facilities	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agreed	10	10	10	10
Disagreed	90	90	90	90
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Field Questionnaire

Table 2 (b) above reveals that 10 (10%) of the teachers agreed that there is utilization of internet facilities in public and private secondary schools in Pankshin L.G.A. Plateau State, while 90 (90%) had a contrary opinion of

the utilization of the internet facilities in both public and private secondary schools in the Local Government

Table 3: Showing the constraints faced by the use of internet facilities by the students of public and private schools in Pankshin L.G.A., Plateau State

Level of challenges faced by students in utilization of internet facilities	Public schools		Private schools	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agreed	105	52.5	105	52.5
Disagreed	95	47.5	95	47.5
Total	200	100	200	100

Source: Field Questionnaire

faced less challenges in the utilization of internet facilities. Therefore, the results indicate that public secondary school students faced more challenges in the utilization of internet facilities than private secondary school students in Pankshin L.G.A of Plateau State.

Discussion

The findings reveal that there is significant disparity in the availability and utilization of internet between public and private secondary schools in Pankshin LGA. The findings indicate that private schools benefited better infrastructures, funding, and trained personnel, facilitating effective integration of internet resources into education. Public schools however struggle with infrastructural deficits and limited support, hindering students' access to digital learning tools. These findings align with previous studies thereby highlighting the need for support in Nigerian educational system. The study recommends that the government, NGOs and other stakeholders arrange the provision of internet facilities and training for teachers and students in public secondary schools to enhance their utilization of internet for educational purposes. The findings also reveal that internet facilities were not functional for usage by the students. The findings support Osunwusi & Abifarin (2013), who found that private secondary school's students have access to computer systems, usage of systems and internet facilities more than public secondary school students who lack computer facilities.

A similar research was conducted by Luambano and Nawe (2004) as cited in Mohammed & Muhammed, (2017) on internet usage by students of the University of Dares Salaam. The study was to determine if students were using the internet for academic purposes, investigate the level of students' access to the internet, as well as the problems students faced in internet utilization in their studies. Furthermore, the researcher observed that public secondary schools have more challenges in the utilization and also the availability of ICT gadgets in their schools. The findings explored ways of improving students' utilization of internet for their studies by

provision of computer laboratories and encouraging students to share knowledge using ICT tools.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the need for the government and other stakeholders to prioritize the provision of internet facilities and training for teachers and students in public secondary schools to enhance their utilization of the internet for educational purposes. The study also suggests organizing workshops on information technology, educating the staff on the importance of internet in the learning process, looking for grants from the government to buy computers, seeking ICT grants from NGOs and using parents' contributions for buying computers for both public and private schools in the locality.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government should prioritize the provision of internet facilities in public secondary schools.
2. Teachers and students in public secondary schools should be trained on how to utilize the internet for educational purposes.
3. Private secondary schools should continue to invest in internet facilities and training for their teachers and students.
4. The government, NGOs and other stakeholders should explore ways to reduce the cost of internet subscriptions and improve internet speed in public and private secondary schools.

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