



Digital Readiness among Academics in Faculty of Education: Implications for Educational Management

Philip Igenegbai^{1*}, S. P. Ugolo²

¹Department of Educational Management, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

²Bayelsa Teacher Training Registration and Certification Board, Nigeria

Correspondence e-mail * : philip.igenegbai@uniben.edu

Abstract : The study investigated the digital readiness of academic in Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. It explored their technological competencies, attitudes, and perceptions. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The 133 lecturers in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City were the targeted population of the study. While the sample size of 100 lecturers was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan formula. A structured questionnaire titled “Academics Digital Readiness Questionnaire (ADRQ)” was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts in educational management, while its reliability was determined through a pilot-test and data collected were analyzed with Cronbach Alpha formula and the coefficients was 0.85. The data collected were analyzed using mean statistic and independent sample T-test. Findings indicated that academics had moderate digital skill, and readiness to leverage on digital technologies. The study recommended targeted training for lecturers, infrastructure development, and reforms to enhance digital skills and readiness of academics, and effective educational management

Keyword : Digital readiness, Skills, Academics, Faculty of Education; Educational management.

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INTRODUCTION

Technological advancement has resulted to digitalization of various aspects of human existence. Today, it is almost impossible to identify any sphere of human existence devoid of digital presence. This is usually because of the ease it brings to doing things. Digitalization has provided more flexibility and inclusion in education. Its impact on our daily routines and lives is monumental. Thus, academics and institutions are adjusting to fully accommodate it. The imperativeness of digitalizing education became loudest during the pandemic (COVID-19). However, many institutions have continued to leverage on its gains, even after the pandemic, while others have either jettison it or are still struggling with incorporating digital technology in delivering education. Nevertheless, academics have continued to embrace and incorporate digital technology into its operation.

Nedum-Ogbede (2023) posited that the digital era has necessitated a paradigm shift in educational delivery at all levels in terms of methods and techniques. Today's instructional delivery is characterized by lecturers and students increasing their leverage on digital technologies like; laptops, personal computers, tablets, interactive whiteboards, projectors, among others to improve their teaching and learning experiences (The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), 2021; Igenegbai & Osasuyi, 2021). Artificial intelligence such as Meta AI, ChatGPT,

among others have equally come into place as digital tools utilized for educational purposes.

This wide acceptance of digital technologies in education is influenced by the ease it brings to educational resource acquisition, remote exchange, collaboration and boosting accessibility and quality of education (Amiaya, 2016). Igenegbai and Osasuyi (2021) revealed that sharing of lecture notes, submitting and evaluating of assignments, assessing students' projects, and other research activities were easily carried out by leveraging on digital technology. These technologies which have been developed as networking platforms help to get current information, share ideas and experiences, prepare for lessons, among others (Amiaya, 2016). Dias-Trindade, Moreira and Ferreira (2021) argued that these advantages have stimulated tertiary institutions around the world towards modifying their teaching and learning processes to make it fitting for the use of digital technologies to promote an educational change and enhance quality pedagogical practices so as to equip students with digital skills that will prepare them for gainful employment or self-reliance after graduation. However, the effective integration of digital technology in higher education requires competency and acceptance by academics. This is because no education can develop beyond the capacity of its teachers (FRN, 2013). According to UNESCO, (2018)

educators need to be able to harness digital technologies to guide students in developing Knowledge Society Skills (KSS) such as critical and innovative thinking, complex problem solving, the ability to collaborate and socio-emotional skills. Therefore, academics responsible for ensuring educational delivery must be digitally ready for effective utilization of digital tools in their job performance.

Nedum-Ogbede (2023) described digital readiness as employees' ability to make use of digital tools to perform office tasks easily. It entails having the competent and skills. Essentially, it examines the willingness of employees to adopt novel approaches, software, and technologies for digital transformation. This encompasses three crucial points: digital skills, trust, and technology use (Horrigan, 2016). Digital skills are the capacity to initiate sessions online, surf the internet, and share online contents. On the other hand, trust entails the capacity to ascertain the reliability of online materials and protect personal information. While technology use is the level at which employees utilize of digital tools to carry out official tasks. The success of e-learning is predicated on the extent of lecturers' readiness to use online resources as a medium for teaching (Eli-Chukwu, et al, 2023). Therefore, academics must be digitally ready to fully leverage on digital resources for university education. According to Nwachukwu and Eneh (2018) in Nedum-Ogbede (2023) the

question of the level of digital readiness of academics especially veteran lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions remains a puzzle. Ascertaining the level of digital readiness of academics would help overcome certain challenges (Dias-Trindade et al., 2021).

Eli-Chukwu, et al (2023) investigated the level of lecturers' readiness in using digital tools (e-learning) in Nigeria universities. The findings revealed that 61.95 percent of lecturers had no exposure to instruction with e-learning. Hence, their readiness in utilizing digital technology is a challenge, which equally impact on the effective use of the few available resources. Similarly, Akanbi (2020) observed that utilization of available e-resources was a challenge due to limited competence. Low level of lecturers' skill and readiness would negatively impact students' performance as its application is required in assessing the progress of students learning. This is predicated on Moedritscher (2006) assertion that e-learning pedagogy is necessary in e-learning teaching method, especially in curriculum delivery.

Furthermore, Eli-Chukwu, et al (2023) revealed that the level of lecturers' knowledge on the use of computers was high but the extent of their e-learning skills was low. This according to Eze et al. (2020) is a challenge which hinders the deployment of digital technology. Similarly, Xaymoungkhoun et al. (2012)

observed that computer knowledge and computer self-efficacy are factors which affect e-learning readiness in developing countries. On the knowledge of lecturers in using e-learning applications, findings equally indicated that 52.20 percent sampled lecturers had prior knowledge of the application as against 40.53 percent with no prior knowledge (Eli-Chukwu, et al, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

Digital technology and ICT in education have become indispensable tools for educational service delivery from basic to tertiary institutions. This is informed by its numerous advantages.

At the University of Benin, certain management decisions such as requesting lecturers to submit results in CSV format, registering on Google scholar, uploading of results on e-senate platform, among others are attempt to maximize the potentials in digital technologies for academic activities. However, personal observation suggests that its utilization for academic related activities such as teaching, assessment, project review, peer review of papers for publication, senate and academic board meetings is still minimal or at the discretion of individual lecturers. Could this be a result of the level of skill and readiness of lecturers on the use of digital technology? Therefore, this study assessed the readiness of lecturers on the use of digital technology for

academics in the University of Benin, Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions were formulated for the study.

1. What is the level of digital skills of academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of digital readiness among academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria?
3. What is the level of digital readiness among senior and junior academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between the level of digital readiness among senior and junior academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The 133 lecturers in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City were the targeted population of the study. The sample size of 100 lecturers was determined using the

Krejcie and Morgan formula, while the sampled lecturers were drawn using the multistage sampling technique. This was to ensure that the variables of interest were adequately accommodated. A structured questionnaire titled “Academics Digital Readiness Questionnaire (ADRQ)” was used for data collection. The questionnaire had two sections A and B. Section A was used to elicit demographic information of the respondents such as rank, faculty and sex of respondents. While, section B contained 20 items. The instrument was structured on a four-point rating scale; Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The instrument was subjected to validity by experts in Educational Management. The reliability of the instrument was determined using a pilot-test and data collected were analyzed with Cronbach Alpha formula to determine the internal consistency of the instrument and correlation coefficients of .85. Data was collected by the researchers with the support of two research assistants. Mean statistic was employed to analyse the data collected for the research questions. The decision rule was; 1.0-2.4 mean point as low, 2.5-3.0 as moderate, and 3.1-4.0 as high. While independent sample T-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One

What is the level of digital skills of academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria?

Table 1.
Mean analysis of the level of digital skills of academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

Digital Skills of Academics	N	X	$\bar{X}$	Remarks
Usage cloud storage account	100	231	2.31	Low
Use of computer applications for preparation of results	100	343	3.43	High
Use of computer applications for presentation of results	100	294	2.94	Moderate
Preference to respond to online questionnaires	100	254	2.54	Moderate
Ability to review soft copies of student project	100	239	2.39	Low
Ability to carry out peer review works with my laptop	100	269	2.69	Moderate
Ability to surf the internet to retrieve necessary materials	100	331	3.31	High
Ability to schedule online meetings or classes	100	248	2.48	Low
Ability to engage in online presentations	100	263	2.63	Moderate
Ability to operate academic (author) identifier database like google scholar and ORCID	100	267	2.67	Moderate
Grand Mean			2.74	Moderate

The analysis in Table 1 revealed that the level of digital skills of academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

was moderate with a total mean of 2.74. Specifically, the mean for usage of cloud storage was 2.31 which is low. This showed that lecturers' ability in maximizing the cloud storage space was low. Ability to prepare results using computer application was high with a mean score of 3.43, while using computer application for presentation of results was moderate with a mean score of 2.94. The mean score of 2.54 for on responding to online questionnaire, indicated moderate ability, while the skill to review soft copies of students' project was low with a score of 2.39. However, the mean score on skill for engaging in peer review via computer application was 2.69 which was moderate. The analysis indicates that lecturers are highly skilled in retrieving relevant materials from the net with a mean core of 3.31. But they are poorly skilled in scheduling online meetings or classes with a mean score of 2.48. Skill in engaging in online presentation and operating academic (author) identifiers like Google scholar was moderate with mean scores of 2.63 and 2.67 respectively.

Research Question Two

What is the level of digital readiness among academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria?

Table 2.
Mean Analysis of the Level of Digital Readiness Among Academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

Academics Digital Readiness	N	X	$\bar{X}$	Remarks
Readiness for paperless results presentation	100	299	2.99	Moderate
Readiness to submit results in excel format	100	310	3.10	High
Course advisers to completely discard manual results preparation	100	290	2.90	Moderate
Preparedness to hold online classes	100	3.06	3.06	High
Willingness for online students' defense	100	294	2.94	Moderate
Confidence to engage in peer review works strictly with softcopies	100	294	2.94	Moderate
Willingness for only electronic administering of questionnaires	100	2.34	2.34	Low
Preparedness to make lecture materials available online	100	290	2.90	Moderate
Acceptance of ICT competence as a promotion criterion	100	233	2.33	Low
Acceptance of only online publications of research	100	258	2.58	Moderate
Grand Mean			2.81	Moderate

The analysis in Table 2 revealed that the level of digital readiness among academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria was moderate with a total mean of 2.81. Specifically, the mean for lecturers' readiness for paperless results presentation, readiness to

completely discard manual preparation of level results by course advisers, readiness to engage in online students' defence, and engaging in peer review with softcopies had moderate mean scores of 2.99, 2.90, 2.94, and 2.94, respectively. Similarly, the mean scores for lecturers' readiness for making lecture material available online and acceptance of only online publication of research were equally moderate with 2.90 and 2.58, respectively. However, the mean scores for readiness to submitting of results on excel format and engaging in online classes were high at 3.10 and 3.06 respectively. On the contrary, lecturers showed poor readiness to accept strict administering of questionnaire via electronic mediums and for ICT skills to be a promotion criterion with mean scores of 2.34 and 2.33, respectively.

Research Question Three

What is the level of digital readiness among senior and junior academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria?

Table 3.
Mean analysis of the level of digital readiness among senior and junior academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

Academics	Senior Academics				Junior Academics			
	N	X	$\bar{X}$	Remark	N	X	$\bar{X}$	Remark
Readiness for paperless	36	108	3.0	High	64	191	2.98	Mode rate

results presentation								
Readiness to submit results in excel format	36	111	3.08	High	64	200	3.13	High
Course advisers to completely discard manual results preparation	36	99	2.75	Mode rate	64	191	2.98	Mode rate
Readiness to hold online classes	36	109	3.03	High	64	196	3.06	High
Readiness for online students' defense	36	109	3.03	High	64	184	2.88	Mode rate
Readiness for peer review works strictly with softcopies	36	107	2.97	Mode rate	64	187	2.92	Mode rate
Readiness for only electronic administering of questionnaires	36	80	2.22	Low	64	155	2.42	Low
Preparedness to make lecture materials available online	36	107	2.97	Mode rate	64	183	2.86	Mode rate
Acceptance of ICT competence as a promotion criterion	36	88	2.44	Low	64	144	2.25	Low
Acceptance of only online publications of research	36	95	2.64	Mode rate	64	164	2.56	Mode rate
2.81				Mode rate			2.80	Mode rate

The analysis in Table 3 revealed that the level of digital readiness among senior and junior academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria was moderate with a total mean of 2.81 and 2.80, respectively. Specifically, the mean for lecturers' readiness to completely discard manual preparation of level results by course advisers (2.75 and 2.98), engaging in peer review with softcopies had moderate mean scores (2.97 and 2.92), readiness for making lecture material available online (2.97 and 2.86), and acceptance of only online publication of research (2.64 and 2.56) had moderate mean scores from both senior and junior lecturers' responses, respectively. The analysis further indicated that both senior and junior lecturers are poorly ready to accept strict administering of questionnaire via electronic mediums (2.22 and 2.42), and for ICT skills to be a promotion criterion (2.44 and 2.25), respectively. On the contrary, both senior and junior lecturers indicated high readiness to submitting of results on excel format (3.08 and 3.13), and engaging in online classes (3.03 and 3.06) respectively. However, the analysis indicates disparities in the responses of senior and junior lecturers on their readiness in the following aspects; while senior lecturers are highly ready for paperless results presentation with a mean of 3.0, junior lecturers are moderately ready with a mean of 2.98. Similarly, on the readiness to engage in online students' defense, senior lecturers indicated high

readiness with a mean score of 3.0, while junior lecturers are moderately ready with a mean score of 2.88.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the level of digital readiness among senior and junior academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

Table 4.
T-test analysis of the difference
between the level of digital readiness
among senior and junior academics
in the Faculty of Education,
University of Benin, Benin City,
Nigeria

Lecturers		N	X	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Readiness	Senior Academics	36	28.13	.796	.074	98	.941	H ₀ accepted
	Junior Academics	46	28.05		.072	43.572	.943	

The independent samples t-test analysis in Table 4 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in digital readiness between senior academics (M = 28.13) and junior academics (M = 28.05), $t = 0.074$, $p = 0.941$. This means that both senior and junior academics in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, demonstrate comparable levels of digital readiness. Since the p-value (0.941) is far above the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis is accepted. The study shows that digital readiness is

consistent across senior and junior academics.

Discussion

The result of the analysis indicated that the level of digital skills of academics in Nigeria universities was moderate with a total mean of 2.74. This implies that lecturers are developing requisite competence necessary to leverage on the digital ecosystem. However, this seems to be at the basic level. This shows a departure from Eli-Chukwu, et al (2023) which revealed that the extent of lecturers e-learning skills was low, even though, their knowledge on the usage of computers was high. Several factors could account for the growing digital skill of lecturers. This includes the consciousness of the ease it brings to job delivery (Amiaya, 2016, Igenegbai & Osasuyi, 2021). This explains why the findings indicated that lecturers are highly skilled in the use of computer application for results preparation and for retrieving relevant online materials for teaching and research. Furthermore, institutions have begun to make it compulsory for academics to use digital platforms for certain activities. For instance, in the University of Benin, it has become mandatory for lecturers to have Google scholar account, hence, lecturers have necessarily acquired some level of competence in this regard. Dias-Trindade, Moreira and Ferreira (2021) argued that the advantages inherent in digital technologies have stimulated tertiary

institutions around the world towards modifying their teaching and learning processes to make it fitting for the use of digital technologies. In the same vein, most conferences academics participate in today are hybrid, physical or virtual. With the increase in cost of services, like transportation and accommodation which are incidental cost in conference participation, many academics now attend conferences virtually. This equally reveals why the findings indicated lecturers having significant level of skill in engaging in online presentation. The low level of skill in the use of cloud storage as revealed by the findings may not be unconnected with the dependence of cloud storage on internet connectivity. With the increasing cost of data or internet subscription, lecturers would naturally continue with the traditional storage on hardware, such as flash drives, hard disks, etc.

On the level of digital readiness among academics in Nigeria universities the findings revealed moderate readiness among academics with an overall mean of 2.81. This indicated commendable willingness to use digital resources, even though not high. This varied from Eli-Chukwu, et al, (2023) who observed lecturers were not ready to use the few available digital resources. This was equally corroborated by Akanbi (2020) who observed that utilization of available e-resources was a challenge due to limited competence. The observed level of readiness among lecturers is equally

because of the advantages they have come to associated with the use of digital tools for both academic and administrative purposes. The findings revealed that lecturers are significantly ready for paperless results presentation, ready to completely discard manual preparation of level results by course advisers, engage in online students' defence, and engaging in peer review with softcopies. Similarly, academics are ready for making lecture material available online and acceptance of only online publication of research. This was echoed by Igenegbai and Osasuyi (2021) that lecture materials were being share via digital platforms. The high level of readiness to submitting of results on excel format as revealed by the findings may not be unconnected by the school's policy of course results being uploaded in CSV formats. Academics readiness to engage in online classes may likely be because it will afford lecturer with more time as well as ease the burden on transportation cost to campuses for lecturers. However, the unwillingness of academics to accept strict administering of questionnaire via electronic mediums and for ICT skills to be a promotion criterion may not be unconnected to the negative implications it can result to if they are unable to achieve efficiency. That is, a lecturer may be denied promotion simply because he cannot carry out some digital operations. Similarly, a research activity may suffer because

respondents may not have access or competence to respond to e-instruments.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that the level of digital readiness among senior and junior academics in Nigeria universities was moderate with a total mean of 2.81 and 2.80, respectively. According to Nwachukwu and Eneh (2018) the question of the level of digital readiness of academics especially veteran lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions remains a puzzle. This the study has shed some light on. Specifically, it revealed similarity in the level of readiness by both senior and junior academics in the use of digital technologies on preparation of level results by course advisers, engaging in peer review with softcopies, making lecture materials available online, and acceptance of only online publication of research, with moderate mean scores. Again, this may not be unconnected with the realization that these activities which are essential part of their career can be achieved with ease through technology. Hence, they are developing their skill in using digital technology for it and are ready to use it for these activities. This also explains the high mean scores by both senior and junior academics on their readiness to submit results on excel format and engage in online classes. On the unwillingness of both senior and junior academics to accept strict administering of questionnaire via electronic mediums, and for ICT skills to be a promotion

criterion is not strange as these are areas, they do not wish to take chances with, while research is integral to academic career, unhindered promotion is the goal of every academic. Hence, they are not ready for it to be overly dependent on technology which they are not highly skilled at. On the aspects with observed disparities in the responses of senior and junior lecturers such as paperless results presentation, and online students' defense. Senior lecturers indicated more readiness because they are often responsible for the administrative burden that comes with these tasks using the conventional mode. They are the heads of department, deans, and directors on whose shoulders these responsibilities rests on. Hence, if digital technology makes it easier and less expensive, they are highly ready for it.

Implications for Educational Management

Educational management must prioritize continuous professional development in digital competencies. Training should go beyond basic computer use to advanced skills such as cloud storage, collaborative platforms, data analysis tools, and online pedagogical strategies. Capacity-building programs should be designed as ongoing and tiered (basic, intermediate, advanced) to accommodate varying levels of lecturers' readiness and reduce digital skill gaps.

Additionally, institutional policies mandating digital practices (e.g., use of Google Scholar, online submission of results, and virtual participation in academic events) are effective in driving adoption. Management should therefore expand such policies strategically, ensuring they encourage compliance without stifling creativity or disadvantaging less-skilled staff. However, caution must be exercised in linking ICT skills directly to promotion criteria, as this may breed resistance. Instead, a gradual integration of digital competence benchmarks into performance evaluation should be pursued.

The low uptake of cloud storage highlights infrastructural challenges, particularly poor internet access and high data costs. Management must therefore invest in subsidized or institution-supported internet services, campus-wide Wi-Fi, and shared institutional cloud platforms. Reliable ICT infrastructure (servers, databases, virtual learning environments, secure storage systems) should be provided and maintained to support seamless digital transition.

Furthermore, since both senior and junior academics demonstrated similar levels of digital readiness in key areas, training and support programmes should be inclusive and designed to meet the needs of all cadres. However, given senior academics' higher readiness for administrative digital tools (e.g., online

defense coordination, paperless result management), educational managers should leverage their leadership roles by designating them as digital champions or mentors for junior colleagues.

The finding that lecturers are more ready to engage in online classes and conferences due to cost-saving benefits indicates that management should promote hybrid/online models for teaching, learning, and research dissemination. This would not only reduce costs for staff but also increase institutional visibility and academic engagement.

Finally, resistance to digital questionnaires and ICT-based promotion criteria suggests fear of negative consequences if efficiency is not achieved. Educational management must implement change management strategies; awareness campaigns, incentives, and support structures to reduce resistance and build trust in digital processes. Motivation through recognition, grants, and rewards for digital innovation could encourage wider adoption.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that academics in the University of Benin, Nigeria universities are significantly ready for the adoption of digital technology for academic activities. Furthermore, senior academics are more ready for the adoption of digital technology for academic activities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are advanced based on the findings of the study:

1. Lecturers should engage in trainings and continuous usage of digital tools to improve on their digital skills. This could be through organized in-house training programmes (through the DICT unit), peer training or attending ICT institutions to acquire different levels of training and certification from basic to advance depending on their needs.
2. Academics should be enlightened more on the advantages inherent in using digital technologies. This would make them more receptive to its usage. Furthermore, areas of their concerns should be looked into to make digital technology more involving and more accepted. The less treat it seems to pose to academics, the more ready, they will be to its usage.
3. Similarly, more training and enlightenment should be tailored to academics based on their academic status to address peculiar concerns regarding the deployment of digital technologies.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization : All Authors;

Methodology : All Authors ;

Investigation :All Authors ;

Writing original draft preparation :

All Authors ;

Writing review and editing : All

Authors ;

Visualization: All Authors.

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