

# Student Perception of Blogs in Education: A Case Study of Landmark University Undergraduate Students

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## ABSTRACT

The use of blogs in teaching and learning in Nigeria is still at its infancy and a review in the student learning process has become pertinent due to numerous benefits that blogs proffer. Three hundred questionnaires were distributed exploring perceptions of students. Descriptive analysis was carried out in the analysis of data using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. Majority of students were aware of blogs though they still had insufficient information of its use in learning, also students were more interested in the benefits of creative thinking, dissemination of information and ability to view pictures and videos of concepts as well as discussion with classmates. However privacy issues, solitary learning and insufficient information still limited the adoption of blogs in learning in Nigeria. There is a need for university administrators to create an enabling environment for intellectual exchange by aligning the university curriculum to promote creative thinking, collaborative learning and visualization of concepts in learning.

**Keywords:** Blogs, Learning, Nigeria & Undergraduate Students,

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Web 2.0 technologies have given education a ubiquitous perspective which provides a platform for collaborative learning, networking and communication. Blogs have become one of the most important web 2.0 tools in education which provides enormous benefits to students both individually and as a community. Technology literate students have been seen to be prompt at adopting this technology (Halic et al., 2010). Blogs have been seen to foster collaborative learning (Oravec, 2002; Du & Wanger, 2007), Creative thinking skills (Farmer et al.(2008); Fedig & Trammel, 2004) , Interactivity and Active Learning ( Fedig & Trammel (2008), Reflective Learning ( Fergig & Rammell (2008), Sleep & Portman,2011). Blogs have also been considered as a communication tool for effective classroom interactions (Coutinho (2007) & Kumar (2009). Collaborative learning is the benefit commonly derived from blogs in universities. This enables students share ideas with peers which facilitate intellectual exchange (William & Jacob, 2004).

In Nigeria, ICT is increasingly being used with face to face lectures to support learning (Balaji & Chakarabarti, 2010). The acceptances of blogs have been seen to be dependent on the students and teachers attitude towards it (Adedoja & Abimbade, 2013). There is currently dearth of ICT facilities in most schools in Nigeria which invariably affects the use of technology in education, Omotunde et al. (2014) states that the use of blogs will invariably affect the performance of students. Awareness on the impact of technology in education is increasing in Nigeria and there is a need for an enabling environment which will foster this development in education. Landmark University currently began the use of blogs in collaborative agriculture which led to a study of the perception of students towards the use of blogs in learning due to the dearth in literature in Nigeria. According to the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fisbein & Ajzen, 1975 ) human behaviour is shaped by perception, hence the objective of this paper is to ascertain the level awareness of undergraduate students on the use of blogs and the perception of undergraduate students on the perceived benefits and challenges in the use of blogs.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Blogs have been termed as online journals with dated entries presented in chronological order. Extensive literature exists on the impact of blogs in education which has grown significantly in western cultures (Weller et. al.2005). The benefits of blogs in education are numerous. Blogs increases student learning ability (Hain & Back, 2008) and enable students' think of concepts taught in class outside the classroom (Halic et al., 2010). Duffy (2008) also states that blogs improves student critical and analytical thinking skills which is corroborated by Xie et al. (2008) on blogs increasing the reflective thinking ability of students.

In a survey on the perception of students to blogging, Halic et al (2010) reported that majority of students found blogging enhanced their learning, it was also found that students with personal blogs were more interested in blogging than students who did not have blogs ( Kim ,2008). Students also recognize the importance of blogs in facilitating intellectual exchange and improving classroom interaction (Davi et al. (2007); William & Jacob (2004). Blogs can be used as collaborative tools as reported by Davi et al. 2007 & Farmer et.al. 2008). Blogs enable knowledge sharing of concepts learnt among students, Participation in group assignments and also serve as an information dissemination tool, Collaborating with lecturers and peers on concepts learnt has been said to be one of the most important benefits of blogging in education (Farmer et al. , 2008).

The Creative and analytical ability of students is also stimulated by the use of blogs ( Duffy,2008).Blogs enable students to think deeply on concepts learnt and relate these concepts to real-life issues. Hemmi et al. (2009) also states that students develop ideas due to the reflective nature of blogs. Blogs can be used as a platform for reflecting deeply on concepts learnt (Deng, Yuen, 2009) Halic et al. 2008) that when blogs are used for collaborative learning, peers prefer to read other peoples entries than write their own. Kim (2008) also found that students preferred blogging in personal blogs than group blogs. It was also noted that peer feedback affected the reflective thinking benefits of blogs ( Xie et al, 2003) which is corroborated by Adedoja & Abimbade in stating that students and lecturer determine the success of blogs in education.

Blogs in Nigeria is still at its infancy, research on social media in education has focused majorly on academic performance of students in Nigeria (Ajewole & Fashola (2011); Onjeka Sajoh & Bulus(2013), Oluwatoyin( 2011). Education in Nigeria must shift from tradition and embrace technology so as to achieve the benefits of higher education learning rather than the present focus on academic performance .Students attitude toward blogs determine its success. Diyaolu & Rifqah (2015) in a study on the educational use of web 2.0 tools among students found that 50 % of respondents found blogs useful in learning. Nwangwa et al. (2014) also suggests that students rely on blogs to develop their creative writing skills.

The study aims to answer 2 main questions

1. What are the perceived benefits and challenges on the use of blogs among undergraduate students
2. What is the perception of the use of blogs as it relates to learning

## 2.1 Theoretical Framework

Several theories have been adopted in explaining the acceptance of technologies. These models include theory of planned behavior( Fisbein & Ajzen, 1975) ,Unified theory of acceptance and Use of Technology (Venkatesh et al. 2003), Diffusion of innovation (Rogers, 1995), Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) amongst others.

Technology acceptance model has been seen to be widely accepted amongst researchers (Ma & Liu, 2004)). TAM postulates that behavioural intention and attitude is access by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of the system .Perceived usefulness is defined as the belief by a user that using a system will improve performance while perceived ease of use is the degree in which a user perceives a system free of effort (Davis, 1989).

This study did not adopt these models due to the focus of the research which was not solely on technical issues as relates to use which has been seen as a limitation of the user acceptance models (Al-Busaid and Al-shishi, 2010)

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was made up of Landmark University undergraduate student. Landmark University currently began the use of blogs in agriculture; this adoption is still in the early phase .This study was carried out using accidental sampling method. This method was adopted due to the differences in subscription among colleges in the university. The overall sample size was 300. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection, to ensure face validity, the questionnaire was evaluated by other information science professionals to test its validity and modification was made based on assessment. Content validity was established by carrying out a pilot study, in which 10 students participated

Descriptive analysis was used in the analysis of the data. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A measured the demographic characteristics of students ranging from gender, colleges and level of study. Section B measured the awareness and intention to use blogs in education considering the specific benefits that blogs proffer. The questions were measured using a dichotomous scale of 'yes' and 'no' and Likert scales ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, while Section C measures the perceived benefits and challenges of blogs in education

#### 4. RESULT

There was an even distribution of respondents of which 54.9% were male and 45.1% were female. Respondents were also spread across colleges and level of study with college of science and amounting for majority with 52.7%.

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	100	54.9
Female	82	45.1
Level of Study		
100 Level	37	20.3
200 Level	55	30.2
300 Level	61	33.5
400 Level	18	9.9
500 Level	11	6.0
College of Study		
CAS	10	5.5
CBS	78	41.8
CSE	96	52.7

#### 4.1 Awareness and Use of Blogs in Education

95.6% of respondents indicated their awareness of blogs; only 79.7% indicated their willingness to use blogs in learning

**Table 2: Awareness and Use of Blogs**

	Yes	No
Awareness of Blogs	95.6	3.3
Willingness to use Blogs	79.7	19.2

#### 4.1 Perception of Blogs in Education

Table 3 reveals majority of respondents are interested in using blogs in learning. More than 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that blogs will improve their learning ability in general. Use of emerging technologies such as blogs improves the interest of students in learning

**Table 3: Perception of Blogs in Learning**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Engaging in Discussions online will help remember concepts taught in class			
47.8	42.3	2.2	7.7
Discussing with Lecturers online will enable me Learn better			
47.8	39.0	3.8	8.8
Blogs will improve my writing skills			
39.6	40.7	7.7	11.5
Blogs will enable me share knowledge with classmates			
45.6	45.6	2.2	6.6
Blogs will make learning interesting			
52.7	39.6	0.5	7.1

#### 4.2 Perceived Benefits of Blogs in Learning

In the assessment of the perceived benefits of blogs in learning creative thinking and dissemination of classroom news were perceived highest with 58.2% respectively, also viewing concepts taught in pictures , videos and games amounted to 57.7%, perceived benefits of Discussion with classmates amounted to 55.5%.

Figure 1: Perceived Benefits of Blogs in Learning

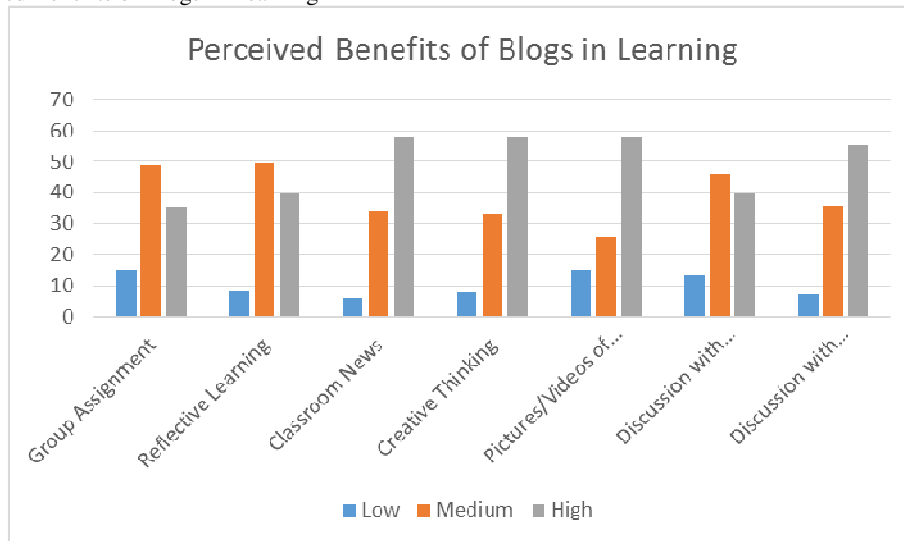


Table 4: Perceived Benefits of Blogs in Learning

Blogs in Learning	Low	Medium	High
Group Assignment	14.8	48.9	35.2
Reflective Learning	8.2	49.5	40.1
Classroom News	6.0	34.1	58.2
Creative Thinking	7.7	33.0	58.2
Ability to view pictures, videos & games of concepts	14.8	25.8	57.7
Discussion with Lecturers	13.2	46.2	39.6
Discussion with Classmates	7.1	35.7	55.5

#### 4.3 Perceived Challenges of Blogs in Learning

23.6 % of respondents stated that blogs put their privacy at risk and also stated that they preferred learning alone which amounted to the highest perceived challenge affecting the adoption of blogs in learning. Medium and high challenges amounted for more than 50% of the total size of respondents. Also more than 50% of respondents still have an insufficient knowledge of blogs as it relates to learning

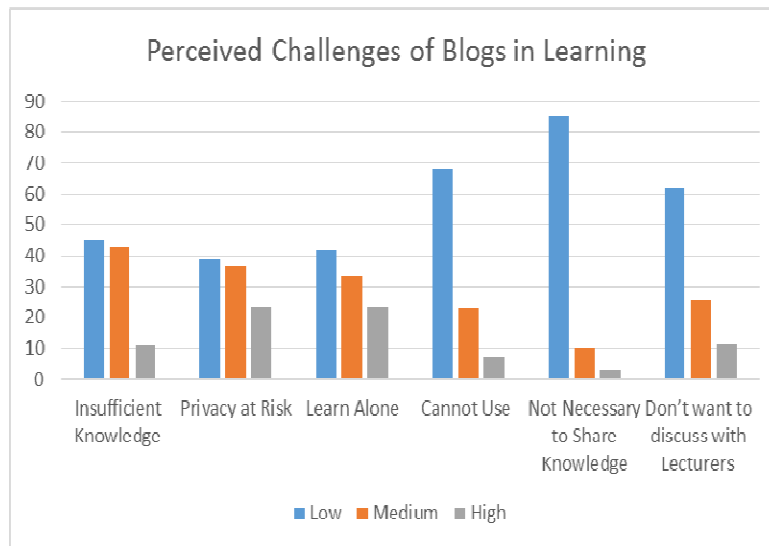


Figure 1: Perceived Challenges of Blogs in Learning

Table 5: Perceived Challenges of Blogs in Learning

Blogs in Learning	Low	Medium	High
Insufficient Knowledge of Blogs	45.1	42.9	11.0
Blogs Puts privacy at risk	38.5	36.8	23.6
Learning Alone	41.8	33.5	23.6
Cannot Use Blogs	68.1	23.1	7.1
Not necessary to share Knowledge	85.2	10.4	3.3
I don't want to discuss with Lecturers	62.1	25.3	11.5

## 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings show that majority of students are aware of blogs in learning, however not all students are willing to use it in learning. The analysis also revealed that more than 80% of respondents stated that blogs will improve their ability to learn. However factors that limited the actual adoption of blogs in learning. More than 50% of respondents stated that blogs put their privacy at risk (60.4%), Students also said they preferred learning alone (57.1%), 53.9% stated that they had insufficient knowledge of blogs in learning. These factors limited the actual adoption of blogs in Learning. The analysis also revealed that the perceived benefits of blogs most significant to students includes creative thinking, dissemination of classroom news, viewing pictures, videos and games on concepts learnt and ability to discuss with classmates on blogs. These findings have implications for university administrators and practitioners as today's generation of students are visual preferring concepts to be animated. There is also need to show students the benefits of knowledge sharing and negate fears about privacy preservation in the digital sphere. University administrators should also conduct training sessions on the usage of blogs in learning before its adoption in learning

## 6. CONCLUSION

Overall, the results of this study indicate that students perceive blogs useful in learning and are willing to use this tool as part of their learning environment. However, they still face limitation of isolated learning, fears of privacy and insufficient knowledge of blogs. Emphasis should be made on aligning the university curriculum to promote creative thinking, collaborative learning and visualization of concepts in learning. It is therefore recommended that university administrators modify the current curriculum to enable participatory learning as knowledge is better retained when critically analyzed and shared, this will invariably improve the teaching- learning process.

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