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READINESS OF UNIVERSITIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY DIGITAL ECONOMIES: A LOOK AT SELECTED LECTURERS FROM UNIVERSITIES IN BUFFALO CITY METROPOLITAN IN EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA [ABSTRACT]

Agyei Fosu — Walter Sisulu University, East London, South Africa — afosu@wsu.ac.za

ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose: The purpose of this study is to expand the knowledge base on factors likely to impede implementation and adoption of web-based learning management systems to blend with traditional methods of lecturing in universities to cater for the next generation of learners in Africa and Eastern Cape Province South Africa in particular.

Background: The shift from the industrial economies to 21st century digital and knowledge-based economies, fueled by rapid Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as Internet, YouTube, Chartrooms, Skype, Social media networks and its introduction to the educational system not only resulted in a new teaching approach globally but also paved way to usher in new generation of learners (anytime, anywhere learners) in the higher education system. Despite the fact that universities and other institutions of higher education in developed countries and some Africa countries have since recognized that the 21st century global digital and knowledge-based economies evolution has ushered in the next generation of learners, and as a result have taken the necessary steps to blend the traditional method of lecturing in higher education with web-based learning management systems in order to accommodate these learners. However, in Africa not much research has been done on the readiness of higher education institutions in terms of blending web-based learning management systems with the traditional method of lecturing to cater for the next generation of learners.

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Methodology	Quantitative and two non-probability sampling methods, namely, quota and purposive sampling was used to investigate the technological skills of selected lecturers from universities within Buffalo City Metropolitan as one of the core component to check the readiness of their faculty for the next generation of learners.
Contribution	This research will add to the growing knowledge about the blending of web-based learning management with the traditional style of lecturing in higher education in the 21st century digital economies.
Findings	The results indicated that the participating lecturers need to be trained and supported in the skills of using of the ICTs and computer programs applicable to enhance web-based learning in teaching and learning environment in higher education in order to cater for the next generation of learners associated with the 21st century digital economies.
Recommendations for Practitioners	Much as there is a need for increased in investment in infrastructure within higher education institutions to support teaching and learning, continuous support and training for academics to be technologically literate and also be abreast on rapidly evolving field of ICTs is paramount as it can expedite the teaching and learning process in higher education.
Recommendations for Researchers	There is the need to explore in depth the other two components suggested by Mishra and Koehler that can serve as barriers for successfully integration of technology into teaching and learning by locus of knowledge.
Impact on Society	The research will assist stakeholders, policy makers and agencies tasked with transforming institutions of higher learning to identify the barriers likely to hinder transformation efforts and address them accordingly.
Future Research	Checking technological skills of students are critical in this context.
Keywords	ICTs, next generation of learners, teaching, technological skills, lecturers, web-based learning management system, 21st century digital economies

BIOGRAPHY

Agyei Fosu is a lecturer in the Department of Information Technology at the Walter Sisulu University where he teaches Information Technology Skills as well as mathematics for IT. He is actively involved in technology in education and in business research.