Online Distance Learning Programme in University of Ilorin Using 89.3 FM Radio Station

Abdulsalam Abiodun Salman[a,*], Tunde Kamal Omopupa[b] and J. Oluwakemi Oyeniyi[c]

[a]*Department of Library and Information Science, University of Ilorin, Nigeria*
[b]*Department of Library and Information Science, University of Ilorin, Nigeria*
[c]*National Centre for Agricultural Mechanization (NCAM), Idofian, Kwara State, Nigeria*
* Corresponding author. E-mail: salbiodun@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses distance learning through the use of wireless technology which allows students to access information for learning remotely at any time. It underscores the experience of University of Ilorin, Nigeria, in the use of Unilorin 89.3 FM radio station as a medium of instruction for the teaching of the use of library (GNS 111). A survey research design was deployed using quantitative research methods in the administration of questionnaire to gather data. The research population consists of the 100 level students in the department of Telecommunication Science, Faculty of Communication and Information Sciences. A sample of twenty students was randomly selected out of sixty two registered students in 2011/2012 session. The results of the survey determine the outcomes of the findings on the experience of the newly introduced teaching pedagogy in teaching GNS 111. Recommendations were made based on the data analyzed using descriptive statistics through chi-square to determine the round case weight.

Keywords: Distance Learning, Unilorin 89.3 Fm Radio, Mobile Technologies, Telecommunication Science Students, Nigeria.

I. Introduction

Thangada (2010) posits distance learning as a field of education that aims to deliver education to students who are not physically "on site". The benefits accrued from distance learning cannot be underestimated as it allows learners to study at their own pace and convenience while the teachers or instructors also adapt their teaching styles to suit the distance learning curriculum as designed. General studies or GNS as it commonly referred to in Nigerian Universities was introduced to allow undergraduates in various disciplines to be exposed to an array of knowledge other than their primary courses in order to adapt to society needs. This was enshrined in the Universities curriculum by the National University Commission as part of the requirements for the accreditation of degree courses. Issa, Amusan and Daura (2009) describes GNS 111 (General Studies), as a course offered to first-year students as an exposition to user's education component of the degree programme in the University of Ilorin. Ojo-Igbinoba (1991) posits that library use component of the General studies is designed to orientate undergraduate users of the academic library how library use can assist them in them studies. Recent proliferation and application of technologies in the delivery of goods and services is fast radiating all human endeavours including education. Study by Andreu and Jauregui (2005) reveals that there has also been research into whether traditional training is better than the use of technology or vice versa. Such technologies including computers, internet, television and radio are deployed to delivery of instructions in education to enhanced knowledge delivery as methods of teaching course contents have changed considerably in recent times and research becoming more diversified and more specialized (Unomah, 1987). Radio, in particular has undoubtedly become the highest medium of communication in the world today as its coverage is adjudged to be greater than other communication mediums and radio is the most affordable educational technologies available for the use in education and development in developing countries (Odera, 2011).

II. Statement of the Problem

There is always an increase in the yearly enrolments

of new students in University of Ilorin that offers the use of library (GNS 111) as a course which is mandatory for the first year students as orientation, education and enlightenment programme on the basic elements of library usage and understanding. Because of the increase in the enrolment size which does not commiserate with the available facilities to teach this army of new students, it is desirable to introduce online distance learning as a means of reaching this large population through the newly established Unilorin 89.3 FM radio station. A lot of students could face the challenges of over-stressed, inconveniency of lecture time schedule, inability to comprehend face to face lecture and phobia for crowd among others. Although, scholars such as (Kanwischer and Quennet, 2012; Bagnato, 2004; Beldarrain, 2006; Yusuf, 2005; Altalib, 2002; Yusuf, 2013; Simpson, 2013) have posited on the need for online distance learning as basis for teaching and learning in the academic terrain but do not address the specific needs of the students peculiarity on GNS 111 as one of the beneficiaries of the system. It is against this backdrop that this study sets out to investigate online distance learning programme in Unilorin using 89.3 FM radio stations for improved academic performance.

III. Objectives of the Study and Research Questions

Objectives of the study are listed as follows.
1. To identify online distance learning (ODL) programme in Unilorin
2. To explore the use of online distance learning in teaching GNS 111 in Unilorin
3. To determine the use of 89.3 FM radio station in teaching GNS 111
4. To establish the use of 89.3 FM radio station in teaching GNS 111 at improving academic performance of students.

In the study, answers of the following questions are being investigated.
1. Are there courses taught using the online distance learning (ODL) pedagogy in Unilorin?
2. What are the reasons for the teaching of GNS 111 in Unilorin?
3. What are the reasons for using ODL in the teaching of GNS 111?
4. Can 89.3 FM radio stations be used for the teaching of GNS 111?
5. Can academic performance of students be determined using 89.3 FM radio station in teaching GNS 111?

IV. Research Methodology

Survey research design was deployed in carrying out thus study. This was made possible with the use of quantitative methods using questionnaire to gather data among the 100 level students in the Department of Telecommunication Science, Faculty of Communication and Information Sciences, University of Ilorin in order to investigate the newly established online distance learning programme through the Unilorin 89.3 FM radio station as part of the instruction for teaching GNS 111. The study population is sixty two (62) registered students in 2011/2012 academic session. A sample of twenty (20) students was drawn for data administration and the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) research was deployed for data analysis.

V. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Distance learning is a system through which teaching and learning take place without face to face interaction between teachers and learners, it is referred to as field of education that focuses on teaching methods using technology with the aim of delivering teaching to students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting such as a classroom (Kanwischer and Quennet 2012). Distance learning in education is not a recent phenomenon as Bagnato (2004) notes that distance learning in some form or another has been in existence since the days of the correspondence course but the recent boom is due to the advent computers and other communication technologies. Beldarrain (2006) posits that distance education emerged as a response to the need of providing access to those who would otherwise not be able to participate in face-to-face courses whereby distance and space will not be a denial. Developing countries like Nigeria have recorded little or no success at implementing policies relating to education of her citizens through the provision of infrastructure with challenges that include finance and manpower, meanwhile the implementation of distance education provide succour for both learners and teachers using the emerging technologies and the real-time and/or time-delayed collaboration (Bagnato, 2004).

Information and Communication Technology in Distance Learning

Information and communication Technology is the application of modern communication tools to the hitherto manual job processes with the use of computers and other communication gadgets. The applications of ICT traversed all human endeavours from domestic cores to serious educational, public services and security issues. Yusuf (2005) affirms that undoubtedly, ICT has impacted on the quality and quantity of teaching, learning and educational research in traditional and distance education. Altalib (2002) posits that technology that was only available to large corporations and organizations are now available at homes, schools and universities provided new shift in applications has provided both students and educators many new advantages and learning possibilities. Allen,

Bourhis, Burrell and Mabry (2002) found that distance education does not diminish the level of student satisfaction when compared to traditional face-to-face methods of instruction. Wireless technology is an important component for delivery of distance education through the use of transmitter and receiver. According to Bolcskel, Paulraj, Hari, Nabar, and Lu, (2001) wireless access system is a distributed antennas, distributed processors and distributed control with distributed antennas and system capacity which can be expanded through dense frequency reuse can be applied to amplified communication in education.

GNS at University of Ilorin

General Studies Division was created in 1977 and was administered from the Faculty of Arts and its status was changed by Senate decision in February 1998 to makes the Division an autonomous Unit in the Vice-chancellor's office. The Division provides for the teaching of five general courses to the whole of the University. These courses were 2 credits each and are classified as required courses for all students. Among the courses that must be taken and passed before a student can graduate include GNS 111 - Use of English I (including Use of Library) GNS I11 is offered by 100 level and fresh 200 level students respectively. The Division is headed by a Director (who must be a Professor) and assisted by a few Administrative Staff. Participating lecturers that teach various courses are recruited from relevant Departments within and outside the University depending on their fields and are paid on the basis of number of hours taught.

Curriculum and Teaching Module of the Use of Library

The vision and objectives of the University of Ilorin GNS division are to improve the language and communication skills of all students and to help them develop adequate competence in the Use of English Language as a tool for their current studies and future services, assist students to develop and expand the awareness of their social/cultural and physical environments which will invariably prepare them to function effectively in the society, socialize the Nigerian students to cultivate desirable behaviours, values, attitudes, patriotism, nationalism and to appreciate the position of the Constitution as the will of the people and to sensitize students to the functions and obligations of Government at all levels and to introduce students to the broad areas of sciences and to create awareness of the services of science to man and the effect of science on human society (Unilorin GNS Division, 2013). The use of library aspect of the Unilorin GNS covers areas that include brief history of library, library settings and organogram. It further elaborates on the different sections of the library with emphasis on the organisation of knowledge in the library to expose students to various knowledge areas

that will assist students in the term papers, assignment, examinations and research writings.

Distance learning at University of Ilorin

Kaufman, Watkins & Guerra, (2001) describes distance education as a means through which the delivery of useful learning opportunities are provided at a convenient place and time for learners irrespective of the institution providing the learning opportunity. Yusuf (2013) explains that distance learning at University of Ilorin provides for students to be kitted with learning materials ahead of lecture time online while students can interact with their lecturers via social media. Students may also test themselves and reach their classmates online and through other wireless devices. Through distance learning members of the class will be participants in the activities of the class while the lecturer may upload relevant video and refer students to materials online with little or no direct supervision. Yusuf (2013) further indicates that new system creates a community of practice which is a departure from the face to face teacher-centered method to student-centered learning that is unprecedented in the Nigerian university system. Simpson (2013) indicates cost effectiveness and opportunity for students to learn in the comfort of their homes and avoid the risk of travelling to the study center as benefits of the programme. This was corroborated by Yusuf (2013) as giving the drop outs and workers to learn and acquire certificates while working fulltime.

Unilorin FM Radio Station 89.3 FM

Abdulkareem (2010) observes that electronic information media are becoming increasingly popular worldwide while Radio and Television are taking the roles of informing, educating and entertaining their listeners/ viewers. Taken in cognizance the roles of radio at educating the people the University of Ilorin in 2010 to established the Unilorin 89.3 FM Radio station to compliment the current traditional pedagogy to reach out to students remotely and provide other radio media services. The Unilorin 89.3 FM provides many educative services that include beaming lectures to the university students at different levels and course Include lecture on GNS 111 (the use of library) to which lecturer delivers lectures while students listen and learn remotely.

Telecommunications Science Department and Use of Library (GNS 111)

Telecommunication Science department in the University of Ilorin came into being as a response to the need for well-rounded graduates that will be capable of combining theory, practice and managerial skills at meeting the challenges of the highly specialized and competitive global telecommunications industry, (Department of Telecommunication, 2013).

Telecommunication Science department of the University of Ilorin was established to serve as one of the main drivers of economic growth and globalization in Nigeria to produce telecommunication specialists who are well grounded in the theory and practice of telecommunication. Its aims are to train competent telecommunication specialists to meet the challenges of the 21st century in the growing telecommunication industry. The objectives of establishing the department is to train students in the core area of telecommunication include network computing and security, intercontinental digital networks, wireless communication, telecommunication software applications with information and communication technology, telecommunication planning, analysis and design and Telecommunication management. As much as possible, the theories and principles of the above core areas shall be bridged with practical attachment in relevant industry. At the end of the programme the graduates would be able to apply telecommunication knowledge and skills in organizational environments to embrace life-long learning and contribute to their communities. All these objectives of the department can be meaningfully achieved if there is lack of orientation on the use of library as a means of exposing the students to good library mechanisms in accessing and using relevant information materials for research, assignments and examinations.

VI. Data Presentation and Analysis

There are five female students and fifteen male students comprising of the total population of the respondents.

TABLE I
AVAILABILITY OF ONLINE DISTANCE LEARNING IN UNILORIN

	YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%
	20	100.00	20	100.00
Total	20	100.00	20	100.00

All the respondents agreed to the fact that, there is online distance learning programme at university of Ilorin.

TABLE II
DESIRABILITY OF ODL AT UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN

	YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%
	20	100.00	20	100.00
Total	20	100.00	20	100.00

All the respondents in the department of telecommunication science agreed that ODL is desirable in University of Ilorin.

TABLE III
CAN ODL BE USED FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING?

	NOT SURE		YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
	2	10.00	18	90.00	20	100.00
Total	2	10.00	18	90.00	20	100.00

10% of the respondents are not sure whether ODL can be used for teaching and learning, while 90% subscribe to the fact that, ODL can be used for teaching and learning at University of Ilorin.

TABLE IV
IS ODL USED FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN UNILORIN?

	NOT SURE		YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
	2	10.00	18	90.00	20	100.00
Total	2	10.00	18	90.00	20	100.00

10% of the respondents are not sure with the above variable, while 90% said ODL is used for teaching and learning in Unilorin.

TABLE V
IS ODL USED FOR TEACHING GNS 111?

	YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%
	20	100.00	20	100.00
Total	20	100.00	20	100.00

All the respondents subscribe to the above variable.

TABLE VI
DOES UNILORIN OFFER GNS 111?

	YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%
	20	100.00	20	100.00
Total	20	100.00	20	100.00

Everybody agreed to the fact that, Unilorin offers the use of library (GNS 111) by ticking "Yes".

TABLE VII
IS GNS 111 TAUGHT AT UNILORIN USING ODL?

	YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%
	20	100.00	20	100.00
Total	20	100.00	20	100.00

All respondents indicate that GNS 111 is taught at Unilorin using ODL by ticking "Yes".

TABLE VIII
DO YOU THINK GNS 111 IS BENEFICIAL?

	NOT SURE		YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
	3	15.00	17	85.00	20	100.00
Total	3	15.00	17	85.00	20	100.00

15% of the respondents are not sure whether GNS 111 is beneficial, while 85% said it is beneficial.

TABLE IX
DID YOU REGISTER FOR GNS 111?

	YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%
	20	100.00	20	100.00
Total	20	100.00	20	100.00

All the respondents registered for the use of library (GNS 111) at the beginning of the session and this form the basis for population and administration of questionnaire.

TABLE X
AWARENESS OF UNILORIN 89.3 FM RADIO STATION

	NOT SURE		YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
	2	10.00	18	90.00	20	100.00
Total	2	10.00	18	90.00	20	100.00

All the respondents are aware of the existence of Unilorin radio station.

TABLE XI
IS UNILORIN 89.3 FM RADIO STATION USED FOR TEACHING?

	YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%
	20	100.00	20	100.00
Total	20	100.00	20	100.00

All the respondents agreed to the above statement.

TABLE XII
SATISFACTION OF THE USE OF 89.3 FM RADIO STATION FOR GNS 111

	YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%
	20	100.00	20	100.00
Total	20	100.00	20	100.00

Everybody is satisfied with the use of 89.3FM radio station as a medium of instruction for library use.

TABLE XIII
DOES ODL THROUGH UNILORIN 89.3 FM IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE?

	NOT SURE		YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
	3	15.00	17	85.00	20	100.00
Total	3	15.00	17	85.00	20	100.00

15% of the respondents are not sure whether ODL improves academic performance, while 85% agreed by ticking "Yes".

TABLE XIV
DO YOU RECOMMEND 89.3 FM FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING?

	NOT SURE		YES		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
	2	10.00	18	90.00	20	100.00
Total	2	10.00	18	90.00	20	100.00

90% recommended the use of Unilorin 89.3 FM radio station for teaching and learning (GNS 111).

VII. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Demographic data reveals that, all respondents are in the same department (Telecommunications) in the same faculty (CIS). However, gender analysis indicates that, there are five female students and fifteen male students among the respondents, totaling twenty (100% respondent rate). All the respondents agreed that, ODL is available and desirable at University of Ilorin. 10% of the respondents are not sure whether ODL can be used for teaching and learning, while 90% subscribe to the fact that, ODL can be used for teaching and learning. All the respondents registered for GNS 111 (Use of Library), 85% agreed by ticking "Yes" that, the course is desirable and beneficial, while 15% is not sure. All the respondents are aware of the existence of Unilorin 89.3 FM radio station and that the radio is used for the teaching of GNS 111. They are also satisfied with the introduction of the new teaching pedagogy. However, 10% of the respondents are not sure whether the method can improve academic performance, but 90% agreed by saying "Yes". The system was however, recommended for teaching and learning at University of Ilorin.

Based on the results of the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- Online distance learning in teaching GNS 111 should be embraced by both the University authorities and the students.
- Unilorin 89.3 FM radio station could be used for more online courses, this is not to jettison the other social, informative and entertaining activities of the radio.
- Students of Unilorin should be encouraged to listen to Unilorin 89.3 FM radio station especially for online programmes in order to improve their academic performance.
- The management of the University of Ilorin should create a more conducive broadcasting atmosphere for Unilorin 89.3 FM radio station in terms of the office, studio and equipment availability and maintenance mechanism also put in place.

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Authors' Biographies

Abdulsalam Abiodun Salman holds DLS, BLS, MLS, and PGDE. He is a lecturer in Library and Information Science, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, with over a decade experience in teaching, research and community service. His research interest includes: public libraries, information literacy, library management, information ethics and knowledge management. He is a chartered member of the Nigeria Library Association (NLA). He has published a number of peer-reviewed papers in reputable national and international journals. He is currently analysing his PhD research data in South Africa.
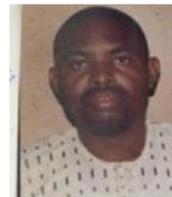
Tunde Kamal Omopupa holds BA(LS), MILR and MLIS from Bayero University, Kano, University of Ilorin and the University of Ibadan Nigeria respectively. He teaches in the Dept. of Library and Information Science, University of Ilorin Nigeria. He is a registered member of the Nigeria Library Association (NLA) and CILIP. He specialises in health information, academic libraries and rural librarianship. He has over a decade experience in teaching and research in Librarianship.

J. Oluwakemi Oyeniyi is Assistant Director (Library) with the National Centre for Agricultural Mechanization (NCAM), Idofian, Kwara State, Nigeria. She holds BLS and MLIS from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, respectively. She is a member of the Nigeria Library Association (NLA). She specialises in agricultural information and library management. She has over a decade experience in Library administration.