The Potential of VLE in Providing Access to Quality Education in Rural Community Schools – Myth or Reality

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Abstract

This study examines the use of virtual learning environment (VLE) to support teaching and learning in rural communities in Ghana by exploring a more efficient and sustainable means of access to information and communication technology for rural communities to enable and empower them to be able to play a more meaningful role in the Information Society. The research environment is a local community college in a rural community in Ghana. Teaching with a learning management system, Moodle and a web-conferencing application, WizIQ were introduced in a pilot project. Initial orientation was given to student participants and two support staff prior to actual commencement of the research project.

The research method employed was Participatory Action Case Study method – a new hybrid extension to the Action Case method – developed in the course of this research in adaptation to peculiar characteristics and constraints of the research environment. Research cycles were carefully planned, implementation and observations were made and data collected using participant observations, interviews, and focus group. The impact of the project was assessed
within an academic term with respect to (i) students’ motivation / interest, (ii) whether or not there has been improvement in academic performances, (iii) ICT awareness and e-literacy and (iv) enriched learning experience.

A multi-system pedagogy was adapted for the introduced technology-mediated learning. It emerged that the level of technology available is unable to support content delivery using web conferencing; however participants were able to take advantage of Moodle courseware aspect to improve performance and enrich learning experience. The technology-mediated delivery of teaching and learning raised learners’ motivation, increased e-literacy level and ICT awareness of participants but reveals challenges that need both public and private support if the project is to be sustained and for learners to derive full benefit of the initiative.

References

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Index Terms

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Virtual Learning Environment, VLE, ICT, e-literacy, Moodle, WizIQ, Learning Experience