

Chapter 15

Higher Educational Institutions and Institutional Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy

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ABSTRACT

Institutional information and communication technology plan is essential in the successful integration of ICT in higher institutions. This chapter deals with the processes and procedures for the development of institutional ICT plan. It covers the prerequisites for higher institutions' ICT plan development like institutional leadership commitment, identification of personnel and members (internal and/or external) to develop institutional ICT plan and constitution of institutional ICT plan committee, research and information on ICT planning, and consideration of ICT committee action plan. It also addresses the adoption of ABCDE development model which encompasses assessment, baseline, components, down to specifics, and evaluation. In addition, institutional ICT plan conclusion, and the development of appendices for institutional ICT strategic plan are discussed. It must be stressed that implementing ICT plan to achieve HEIs goals of enhancing students' learning, promoting teaching and research, and administrative efficiency must be preceded by proper development of institutional ICT plan. Therefore, administrators and lecturers in institutions must know how to develop institutional ICT plan.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become indispensable in contemporary formal and informal education. The entry of ICTs into educational institutions has engendered innumerable challenges which have brought to

the fore, the need for conscious integration of ICT for pedagogical and administrative purposes. The potentials of ICTs in learning and assessment issues, institutional management and organisation, teacher training and development, collaboration and communication among institutions and between institutions and the outside world can only be exploited through proper planning and implementation of ICT policy document. Existence of

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ICT equipment in schools, although inevitable in ICT use in school, may not ensure success; the critical success factors include institutional leadership commitment, teachers' re-organisation of learning situation and mobilisation of ICT in innovative activities (Alves, Simeos, Gomes, & Lima, 2009).

Higher educational institutions (HEIs) are the apex educational institutions in any nation. They are institutions where tertiary education is given after secondary education in universities, polytechnics, monotechnics, and colleges of education. These institutions have, among others, the goals of contributing to national development through high-level manpower training and developing in students the appropriate values for the survival of the individual and that of the society, and developing the intellectual capability for individuals to understand and appreciate their environment. These goals are pursued through teaching, research and development, generation and dissemination of knowledge, staff development, and so on (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2004).

In their quest for promotion of learning and expansion of the frontier of knowledge through research, HEIs are supposed to make good and quality use of information and communication technology (ICT). Through ICT, they can improve on delivery of research products for the academic and economic development of the society. In addition, HEIs have units involved in providing ICT services, ICT research, and ICT education. Thus, ICT is ubiquitous across HEIs. With the continually evolving and changing ICT and the seamless integration of ICT in blended learning and virtual learning, ICT will make learning and research both enriching and exciting. Generally, the importance of ICT in contemporary HEIs cannot be over-emphasised. This is because ICT can offer opportunities for HEIs to provide hospitable environment for scholarship and learning to be accomplished, and also ensure enhanced institutional organisational effectiveness (Western Michigan University, 2001). In addition, ICT can enhance the delivery of research products for both

academic and economic development of individuals and the nation. These potentials of ICT can only be exploited if its use is planned with the institutional goals in mind.

Implementing ICT plan would assist in achieving the HEIs goals of enhancing students' learning, promoting teaching and research, and administrative efficiency. Quality ICT plan would encourage the development of comprehensive plan for improving students' learning as the teacher would be able to use ICT fluidly and transparently to accomplish curriculum goals. This can ensure the application of ICT in developing verifiable quality instructional contents which are available for students' use no matter the time, place or other constraints. Developing institutional ICT policy would provide the necessary framework for enhancing human capacity that would promote enhanced teaching, learning and research in HEIs. Thus, application of ICT tools for enhancing and enriching training of faculty staff for quality performance can be assured. HEIs administrators, faculty, and other staff would provide the highest level of quality service for students' learning. Quality ICT policy would make learning and teaching more ICT based and ensures the maintenance of excellence. The flexibility provided by ICT tools, ICT tools could be used innovatively for developing creative solutions to learning, teaching, research, and administrative challenges in HEIs.

With the aforementioned as the theoretical frame of reference, this chapter is concerned with the steps and strategies for the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of ICT plan for HEIs for the achievement of their cardinal goals of teaching, learning, research, and community service. It deals with the major steps in terms of committee formation, environmental scanning, development of initial draft, incorporation of major components of the plan (vertical, infrastructural, and horizontal) and processes for the final approval of institutional ICT plan. It must be stressed that the institutional type, institutional goals, available resources,

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