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Zooming into the Barriers and Motivations of the Ethiopian University Instructors for Designing and Delivering Content Online: An Institutional Case Study of the University of Gondar

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Abstract

Over the last two decades, the educational field of study has been one of the areas that benefited from the proliferated use of digital technologies. Recent digital technologies in education have focused on online education in developed nations. However, they have paid less attention to the involvement of university instructors in online education in developing countries. Therefore, the current project tried to address this problem by examining the challenges and prospects of instructors in designing and developing content online in Ethiopia's public universities. This study involved 59 participants (15 semi-structured interviews, 32 participants in four focus group discussions, and 12 key informants), derived using a purposive sampling technique. Data were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis to explore participants' explanations about the impediments and motivation of university instructors in designing and developing content online at the University of Gondar, Ethiopia. Explanations were presented in terms of impediments (the state of being faced with the challenges of university instructors) and motivation (the determination of instructors in higher education). The findings showed that the challenges of instructors can be classified as personal (technophobia, digital illiteracy, bad impression of content online, fear of making low-quality content, and lack of knowledge on how to produce content online) and institutional (insufficient infrastructure, absence of curriculums and policies on eLearning education). On the other hand, the prospects of instructors, such as taking eLearning education initiative, online education support services, and boosting awareness of online education, are the facilitators for instructors in developing content online in higher education.

Keywords: content online, university instructors, challenges, prospects, public university

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Introduction

Project Description

Over the last two decades, there has been a drastic shift in innovative technology that is incorporated into many aspects of our lives (El-Sabagh, 2021). The educational field of study is one of the areas that benefit from the proliferated use of digital technologies (Laufer et al., 2021; El-Sabagh, 2021). As a result of rapid technological advancement and a global trend in higher education as well as a need for more flexible educational environments among students (Tsai et al., 2022), new approaches and perspectives in educational practice, such as online learning, have gained momentum in industrialized countries (Palvia et al., 2018; Kwon et al., 2021).

Currently, university instructors in low-middle-income countries are increasingly aware of the advantages of online learning and content for current and future learners (Mtebe, 2011; Ayele & Birhanie, 2018). However, university instructors who have tried to develop and deliver content online have faced serious problems in developing countries (Steele et al., 2018; Rapanta et al., 2020). Due to this, university instructors in particular and public universities in general in these countries have accomplished less than expected in producing human resources in education and science (Capra, 2011; Mor et al., 2015). For example, World Education News and Review ([WENR], 2020) found that Ethiopia's public universities' gross enrolment rate for all programs is only 8.1 percent, which is lower than the least developed countries average and less than half of Sudan, indicating that the country's education system remains underdeveloped and overwhelmed by low participation rates and inclusivity problems (see also Eyasu, 2017).

To respond to these problems, the Higher Education Proclamation (650/2009) developed by the Ministry of Education and ratified by the House of Representatives and legislations of a variety of universities in this country have declared the importance of online learning and content online to increase participation rates and quality education (Yigezu, 2021). However, the use of e-learning in structuring content online in all online degree programs is still

in its infancy in Ethiopian universities due to different challenges (Ethiopian Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency [HERQA, 2021]). Therefore, this study project explored the opportunities and challenges that university instructors in this country have when it comes to developing and delivering content online.

Problem Statement

From the abovementioned background, a few research studies have been undertaken on the challenges and prospects of e-learning in Ethiopia (Beyene & Beshir, 2018; Muhie et al., 2020). But, it is so difficult that we can get research concerning content online in this country (Atnafu, 2015; Ethio Study, 2022). This issue informs us to pay more attention to studying content online. And yet, small bodies of literature that do exist have numerous gaps that warrant further investigations. First, the studies of Fry et al. (20009), Tremblay et al. (2012), and the European Parliament (2015) have placed much emphasis on embracing online degree programs as a core strategy to enable university reform in higher-income countries. Nevertheless, little attention has been directed toward exploring the degree to which content online has importance in addressing the educational gaps of minority groups in Ethiopia.

Second, little research has been devoted to exploring the current state of challenges facing university instructors in developing and providing content online. The available research on the issue is limited, and much of it focused only on knowledge (Dai et al., 2020) and attitude (Ta'amneh, 2021) of content online considered the challenges of it. Third, much of the research conducted in Ethiopia focused on the perceptions of students (Seyoum, 2012; Tegegne, 2014) and both students and instructors (Nihuka & Voogt, 2011) on e-learning. However, there is a paucity of research that examines the extent to which the prospects of university instructors in structuring content online in public universities of Ethiopia. Lastly, variables that have been identified in the previous research as important for predicting the challenges and prospects with content online were rarely evaluated simultaneously. Therefore, this research project addressed

these knowledge gaps by exploring the opportunities and challenges of the university instructors resulting from the need to design and deliver content online to bring learning inclusion, equality, and equity to this university.

Context and Rationale

E-learning is not an established education practice in Ethiopia, and much of the existing research has been undertaken by Western researchers with limited cultural and contextual knowledge. The present study research will, therefore, would enable to creation conducive environment for education policymakers, institution managers, or leaders to understand more about content online based on the institutional context. Besides, the current study will play substantial roles for the institutions to conceivably comprehend how e-learning course is relevant to the roles of university instructors by realizing their values, interests, motivations, and attitudes in the stated university. Accordingly, the rationale of the current proposal will be both empirical and theoretical and serve as a platform for developing evidence-based initiatives for establishing e-learning and content online in conversion with university stakeholders and online learners at the University of Gondar.

Another rationale is that I am currently an e-learning champion and a student of a graduate certificate of Instructional Design and Performance Improvement (e-Learning) at Arizona State University in the United States. These educational qualifications and research experiences will enable me to conduct this study.

Research Questions

To fill the stated gaps, this study will formulate the following research questions.

1. What are the challenges that university instructors face when it comes to developing and delivering content online?
2. What opportunities do university instructors have as a result of the requirement to design and deliver content online?

Significant and Contribution

This research project will have significance and contribution to getting a deeper knowledge of the challenges and prospects of content online on faculty, staff, students, communities, and society at large, as well as its contribution to extending access and improving the quality of e-Learning in Africa in general and universities in Ethiopia in particular. In terms of significance, this research project will lay a solid basis for an e-Learning environment in which understanding challenges and prospects are available for the express goal of instilling and imparting content online and e-learning to all learners and university instructors (ecosystem design). Besides, the current findings will be used to inform the management/leadership of the institution to ground opportunities and address the challenges that will be identified by the research at the University of Gondar (Knowledge mobilization and training). This research project will further have paramount importance in scaling up access and increasing the quality of e-learning and content online in Ethiopian universities and beyond by publishing the findings in reputable journals and presenting the results in different conferences (scaling). Finally, the findings of this study will serve as a platform for developing a Learners' Management System that will be based on web servers and uses application tools and other resources such as a Monitoring and Analysis Tool for the E-learning Program (MATEP) and avatars to address both instructors' and learners' concerns on content online based on evidence-based initiatives

When it comes to the study's contribution to e-learning research, practice, and policy, the intersection of technology, content, and service policies could be formulated to ensure increased cultural competency among all providers and learners, which could help to mitigate the challenges of e-learning and content online. To put this strategy into reality, the results of this study will be sent to the University of Gondar, which will use them to form an e-learning directorate office to plan projects and activities, produce and deliver e-learning, and track how e-learning is effectively addressed to e-learners. To fill up the gaps, this office will provide possibilities for institution-based e-learning research.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Literature review

This study tried to review the literature in line with the research questions as follows.

Content online

In recent years, universities in Africa have paid increasing attention to the usage of content online (Sife et al., 2007). In this scenario, content online is defined as the share of people who use digital media to learn topics, themes, beliefs, behaviors, concepts, and facts, often grouped within each subject or learning area under knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes, that are expected to be learned and form the basis of teaching and learning (Adeboye, 2020). The digital learning scenarios range from computer-based or web-based training to video or video learning, which facilitates complex e-learning training sessions (Sailer et al., 2021). Based on these ideas, we cannot imagine e-learning when we will pay less attention to the content online (Mwanza & Engeström, 2005; Schmidt, 2020). Therefore, the designing and delivering of content online at the University of Gondar is indispensable to bring effective learning, smooth the complexity of e-learning training, and address education for all regardless of diversity based on attributes and demographic characteristics.

Challenges of university instructors in designing and delivering content online

There has been tremendous progress in online content recently, allowing university instructors and students to access online learning regardless of time or place (Schmitz et al., 2017). However, the instructors faced a slew of challenges in putting it into practice at the institution (Nihuka & Voogt, 2011). One of the challenges in developing content online in universities is a lack of understanding about how to create content online. This challenge influenced university instructors' ability to provide content online in institutions (Sife et al., 2007), resulting from a lack of training in online learning design (Mor et al., 2015), negative perception of online learning, and fear of exposing poor quality content (Anderson, 2008) were all identified

as content online challenges for university instructors. Insufficient infrastructure and instructional materials are also another instructor's challenges in designing content online, including insufficient computers, limited server capacity, poor internet services, and unpredictable electricity in developing countries (Sife, 2007; Mtebe & Raisamo, 2011).

Prospects of university instructors in developing and providing content online

Mor et al. (2015) and Schmitz et al. (2017) have found that ICTs can provide students with new learning possibilities (e-Learning), improve teachers' professional capacities (e-Pedagogy), and build institutional capacity (e-Education). Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) have particularly evolved with tools and strategies for course administration and interaction of instructors and learners through a long line of changes, notably web-based apps that enable them to both deliver and harvest knowledge (Unwin et al., 2010; Cavus, 2015). Other opportunities for universities are that learners have access to information through the web and information databases that can meet in a virtual space with other members and practitioner experts to discuss a wide range of issues and engage with other learners and practitioners (Sife et al., 2007; Nihuka & Voogt, 2011). All of these possibilities will benefit universities by allowing them to provide content online for learners in a given time and place (Aboderin, 2015).

Theoretical framework

This study will apply the neo-institutionalism theory as its theoretical lens. It explains institutional changes that affect one institution to become similar to others (Wiseman & Mayoral, 2013). Another basic assumption of this theory is that it identifies, emphasizes, and examines the forces that constraint individuals' ability to change or implement technologies in the context of institutions (Carbone, 2019), as well as, how actors use institutions to maximize their utility to transform, transact, and reform the institution (Rana et al., 2021). This theory further reveals that the knowledge, attitudes, and perspectives of education leaders and managers may serve as a constraint in the environment of organizations to bring about practice change in education

(Shen, 2008; Kwon et al., 2021). In turn, their perspectives and perceptions affected instructors to utilize their abilities and knowledge to fetch institutional change in online learning and content online at universities (Islam et al., 2015, see also Drew, 2010). This is not the only encounter for the instructors, but rather faced multifarious challenges (Nihuka & Voogt, 2011). By taking the basic assumptions of the neo-institutional theory, this research proposal will, therefore, explore the challenges and prospects of university instructors in developing and delivering content online at the University of Gondar.

Research Design: Methods and Modes of Analysis

A qualitative institutional case study was used to achieve the research objectives. This research approach was chosen because an institutional case study is useful to utilize thick and rich descriptions of the challenges and prospects of content online (Peck et al., 2018).

Furthermore, when we want to know what happened and how it happened in the institution, Yin (2002) recommends doing an institutional case study. By its inception, this study explored what challenges facing and opportunities university instructors have in designing and delivering content online, and how these challenges and prospects contributed to learning inclusion, equality, and equity in the institution.

This study was focused on the University of Gondar. This public university is structured into 3 schools, 1 faculty, 2 institutes, 29 directorates, 6 colleges, and 8300 staff. Based on this information, the present study's study population consisted of university instructors who worked in the MasterCard Foundation's associated departments (such as law, sociology, psychology, physiotherapy, nursing, gender and development studies, development and environmental management studies, optometry, public health, and special needs). Participants were accessed using a non-probability purposeful sampling method that generated relevant information on the topic at hand (Ahuja, 2010). To identify the participant, the current study used three methods of data collection with an institutional case study approach: semi-structured interviews, Focus

Group Discussions (FGDs), and key informants to explore the various challenges and prospects in designing and delivering content online at the University of Gondar.

Instructors were interviewed in a semi-structured interview to learn about their perspectives and experiences with the production and distribution of content online at the university. Showing the list of requirements to those who can assist discover informants, such as department heads, school heads, directors, vice deans, and deans, would save a lot of time and effort that may be wasted due to misconceptions. The resource individuals were requested to name the suitable informants one by one. The best informants were those who were referenced most frequently by several resource people. 15 participants from the ten departments were chosen as semi-structured interviewees due to data saturation.

In addition, key informants with extensive knowledge of the environment and expertise in the issue under investigation were used in the current study. 12 key informants from the selected department and university leaders were purposefully chosen to provide a diverse set of representatives to gain new insights on the subject under study (Bryman, 2004, 2009) and obtain information that FGDs and semi-structured interviews could not provide due to cultural barriers (Camic et al., 2003).

In FGDs, the discussants were chosen and divided into groups depending on their collegiate contexts to elicit individual opinions and practices surrounding online content. Furthermore, participants were selected in terms of homogeneous and heterogeneous contexts. In terms of the workforce of the University of Gondar, they are homogenous since all participants were institution instructors with specific interests in developing and providing content online at the university. In college settings, on the other hand, they came from a variety of colleges, making them diverse. After categorizing the 10 departments into 4 colleges, this study featured one focus group discussion (FGD) in each of the four groups ($n = 4$). Each FGD included eight participants because it became a common size for talks.

It is vital to emphasize that the research's findings were tested for dependability by piloting data-collecting technologies at Bahirdar University, which has similar academic and student populations to those where the real study was conducted. With this in mind, potential participants were approached and informed consent was taken. Participants were informed by the researcher about the aims of this study and the types of information that were collected. Participants were also notified that their participation has been completely voluntary and at any time they may withdraw from the study with no penalty. Besides, the confidentiality of participants and the anonymity of participant data were ensured.

Data Analysis

Inductive theme analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to examine qualitative data in the context of the institution since it is a method for extracting meanings and concepts from the stated institution. Based on this, this study assessed qualitative data using a four-step approach. The first step involved familiarization and immersion in the data collected. During data gathering, this stage looked into the inconsistencies of concepts. In this stage, the current study also became acquainted with the challenges and opportunities that university instructors face while creating and delivering online content. The second step involved coding the data. Following familiarization with the data, the present study categorized all of the data into coded categories. The researcher can get a quick summary of the important points and common meanings that repeat throughout the data by using these codes. In Step 3, the discursive exploration was conducted. The present study began examining the data when the coding procedure is completed. The fourth step involved telling the story of the findings. This section dealt with putting the whole analysis into a logical whole, complete with detailed explanations set in the context of the institution.

Having undertaken these steps, the present study read the written responses and interview transcripts many times. As the author read, he began to observe themes. The author

recognized that these issues might be divided into two major themes: impediments and motivation, as he continued to consider and explore them. While a theme highlighted motivation as tied to the opportunities of instructors in terms of planning and developing content online at the University of Gondar, impediments were related to the challenges encountered by university instructors. The current study improved and clarified the subthemes within the major themes using this framework as a guide. The current then quantified the number of participants who supported each theme to record all the data. Additionally, the current study chose illustrative examples for each theme.

Results

This study looked into the prospects and challenges faced by university instructors at the University of Gondar when creating and distributing online content. The research data revealed two key elements in particular; impediment and determination were two of the distinct themes derived from the study's findings. The information is arranged following the college experiences of the university instructors in designing and delivering content online. Under the subjects or themes derived from the analysis, the researcher gave only a few of the interviewees' responses by citing them directly and indented spaces. The result indicated that the participants, 10 key informants from the selected departments (M = 8 and F = 2), 2 university leaders (m = 2), 15 University instructors who participated in the semi-structured interviews, and 24 instructors from four FGDs, believed that University instructors were encountered a wide range of technology, pedagogical content knowledge, pedagogical eLearning, internet resource constraints and other challenges in the selected departments of the University of Gondar in Ethiopia. The participants unanimously agreed that becoming familiar with technology is one of the major daunting challenges of university instructors in developing and designing content online.

The challenges that university instructors face when it comes to developing and delivering content online

The first theme that emerged from the responses to explore the challenges of university instructors in designing and delivering content online was impediments. Under this major theme, two main subthemes were identified, such as personal and institutional difficulties.

Impediments: Personal difficulties. The first challenge that faced all university instructors in designing and delivering content online was personal difficulties. Participants were asked a series of questions about their experience at the University of Gondar at the time of delivering content online. Based on their responses, three subthemes were identified: (a) lack of digital literacy, (b) a lack of knowledge on how to produce content online, (c) a bad impression of content online, and (d) fear of making low-quality content.

Digital Illiteracy. The results from the study depicted that three FGDs (75%) of the four FGD groups, 11 (73.3%) of the 15 university instructors who participated in the semi-structured interviews, and seven (58.3%) of the 12 key informant participants mentioned that university instructors encountered a challenge of having the skills they need to design and develop content online where communication and access to information are increasingly through digital technologies like internet platforms, social media, and mobile devices. For example, one participant said, “I can assure you that I am not accustomed to using technologies to provide my students with online content. Due to this issue, I preferred face-to-face instruction over online or distant learning” (Participant 13, semi-structured interview. Another participant supported this response and mentioned,

We are aware that this is a technological world. Without the aid of technology, nothing can be accomplished well. One solution to the problem is education educational. Our university lecturers are currently struggling to become familiar with various digital literacy skills. They were influenced by this incident to create online academic content (Participant 2, key informant interview)

Another participant in one of the FGDs stated, "If we consider online content, we must also consider digital literacy. For my part, I lack the digital expertise and understanding necessary to teach my students via the internet" (Group 2, FGD response). Thus, in these circumstances, being not able to understand and use technologies has had a major impact on how university instructors at the University of Gondar didn't create and distribute online content. The university leadership needs to pay close attention to strengthening eLearning champions and teams to provide instructional technologies for those who lack technical understanding to easily design and develop online content.

A lack of knowledge on how to produce content online. Closely related to the absence of digital literacy at the University of Gondar, two FGDs (50%) of the four FGD groups, 5 (33.3%) of the 15 university instructors who participated in the semi-structured interviews, and three (25%) of the 12 key informant participants mentioned that the university instructors in this university have a lack of understanding about how to design and deliver content online. For example, one participant said, "To be completely honest, I know nothing about online content. Due to this issue, I find it more difficult to create online content for my department" (Participant 4, semi-structured interviews). Another participant further depicted,

Each instructor lacks the ideas and approaches needed to comprehend how to create content on the web using various technologies. This university is unfamiliar with this online content. Although we are aware that several departments at Health College routinely use digital technology to provide students with online courses, the majority of us lack the necessary knowledge to create online content (Group 1, FGD response).

Another participant also revealed,

Do you know why I've been less attentive to online courses? It's because I have no idea how to create content for the internet. To remind you that during the COVID-19 pandemic, several university lecturers at this university held zoom meetings and sent telegrams. Before, we were unaware of the numerous technologies used for online classes. Training is so important at this time to consider content online (Participant 6, semi-structured interview).

Similarly, another participant mentioned, "hmm... my lack of understanding regarding the creation of online courses makes it challenging for me to create online content" (Participant 9,

semi-structured interview). Therefore, a lack of understanding of the significance of content online utilized to connect with and interact with their target audience (students) in a manner that traditional media can't have brought a negative impact on how they design and generate content online at both a personal and institutional level. One way to address university instructors' lack of knowledge regarding how to create and develop content for online courses at the university level is by offering them training.

A bad impression of content online. The results from the study revealed that one FGD (25%) of the four FGD groups, four (15%) of the 15 university instructors who participated in the semi-structured interviews, and three (25%) of the 12 key informant participants mentioned that they have developed a negative perception of online content. This is because the deficiencies in technologies and manpower for online learning affected them to have a bad impression of the design and development of content online at the university level. For example, one participant said,

...online content at this university is useless without widespread electricity and good internet access. I do believe that the teachers' dedication and enthusiasm for creating this content should not be reflected in the online content design. In my opinion, online content at this point in a university's development could harm learning (Participant 5, semi-structured interview).

This influences the university instructors to design and develop content online (Group 2, FGD response). This conclusion was backed up by a different group, which said, "Although I heard certain departments had taken their endeavors to build online learning, this could not broadly expand the remainder of the college. This is because this university did not consider eLearning before COVID-19. We lack the knowledge necessary to create online content. This impacted the creation of online content that will negatively affect the teaching and learning process for students" (Group 4, FGD response).

Another participant said,

According to my understanding, when we assume the content is available online, we should also assume the kind of technologies this university employed for eLearning. The technologies that are accessible for the creation of online content are still unfamiliar to us. This issue affected online materials that might be used in this university (Participant 15, semi-structured interview).

Thus, the university instructors have neglected their reputations and created negative perceptions about eLearning due to a lack of technologies, electricity, and fast internet, making it difficult for them to do their duties as intended. This has resulted in a corresponding effect on the design and development of content online at the University of Gondar.

A fear of making low-quality content. Seven (46.7%) of the 15 university instructors who participated in the semi-structured interviews assured that they have a concern about producing crappy materials or a fear of creating subpar content. For example, one participant said, "... I don't have the skill of technologies to execute eLearning at this university. This affected me to design good content online" (Participant 14, semi-structured interview). Another participant mentioned,

In the situation where I felt that I wouldn't be able to create online content, I don't hide my feelings. The lack of training to demonstrate online content design techniques may be the cause of this lack of confidence. It interferes with my ability or performance to create this content (Participant 10, semi-structured interview).

Another participant echoed this finding and said,

I'm quite interested in trying to build content for the online." However, I became frustrated that I'm probably going to fail and my expectations for the caliber of the online content design remained low (Participant 3, semi-structured interview).

As another participant admitted, "Our learners and colleagues are supposed to place plenty of expectations on me. They worry that if I create poor or embarrassing content online, my students and faculty members will have a negative opinion of me" (Participant 9, semi-structured interview). In a similar vein, another participant said, "If I don't create the web content well, I worry that my students and colleagues will blame me if I fail" (Participant 7, semi-

structured interview). As a result, university instructors have started to become very obsessive about errors when they assumed to design and develop content online. Beyond other technology and internet issues, these views make individuals feel incredibly low self-esteem and lack confidence in their ability to design online content. In addition, they may not even try it because they are too afraid to fail. They just opt not to try at all because they are so terrified of failing that they will try and risk experiencing pain, embarrassment, or disappointment. Therefore, providing a wide range of technologies, electricity, and the internet will not have solely solved the university instructors' fear of producing low-quality online content, offering psychosocial support would be also crucial to prevent their atelophobia (fear of perfection) and atychiphobia (fear of failure) before providing any utilities.

Impediments: Institutional difficulties. The major theme of impediment from the responses to explore the challenges of university instructors in designing and developing content online in the University of Gondar has been discussed with the institutional difficulties. Under this major theme, two subthemes were identified: (a) insufficient infrastructure and (b) absence of curriculum and policies on eLearning education.

Insufficient infrastructure. One of the main institutional-based instructors' challenges for creating online content is the lack of infrastructure, which includes inadequate computers, constrained server capacity, subpar internet services, and unpredictable electricity, according to all FGDs, university instructors who took part in the semi-structured interviews, and the key informants. One participant stated, for instance, that "This institution has not provided laptops and desktops for us to complete our everyday activities. This issue has impacted our familiarity with eLearning as well (Participant 1, semi-structured interview). Another respondent added, "Designing content online makes us in this institution tough as the institution could not supply robust server capacity " (Participant 4, semi-structured interview). Another group discussion

confirmed the institution's difficulties in creating and designing online material. The members of this group said,

...as you are aware, electricity is viewed as a low-light source in this establishment. I anticipate that there will be at least seven daily powers on and off cycles. The institution where we work was impacted by this...plus additional factors like the absence of strong internet access that led us not to develop content online in the institution (Group 4, FGD response).

Similar to what another participant said, "If this type of learning is effective and feasible, the institution's online design and the content will follow. Otherwise, it will be challenging to both implement and assume it. Therefore, even though university instructors' experiences with e-learning are becoming more and more common in developed countries, institutional upheavals brought on by a lack of adequate infrastructures have affected instructors' and learners' ability to design and develop online content at the University of Gondar.

Absence of curriculums and policies on eLearning education. Issues of lack of curriculum and eLearning policies to deliver content online at the University of Gondar were also raised as a serious point of concern by University instructors and university leaders. The key informants and other participants pointed out several examples where the education policy failed to design and develop content online at the university level. One expressed his feelings in this way, "As I aware you in the prior interview, there is no eLearning policy and online curriculum in this university. Even though some departments occasionally employ online learning with various conventional technologies, they have not adopted it to address content online (Participant 10, key informant interview). This implies that the University of Gondar often strives to execute online education without the auspices of the eLearning policy. This practice can have devastating consequences for university instructors and leadership to design and develop content online. Several participants commented on this issue. For example, a participant claimed:

.....I don't think the design and development of online content in this university without the design and development of the eLearning policy. I do think that this policy provides a

foundation for addressing online education in general, including the online content available at this university. Therefore, unless eLearning policies and curriculum are designed by specialists, this university will have difficulty creating online content (Participant 11, semi-structured interview).

Another participant voiced a similar concern, "Institution leadership has given online education less priority due to infrastructure and financial constraints. These issues could result in a lack of dedication to creating online content (Group 3, FGD response). "The failure to develop online content was also caused by lack of commitment" (Participant 3, semi-structured interview). These results imply that the University of Gondar's online content development depends not only on the eLearning policy and curriculum but also on how the managers promote and support the concepts of online learning.

The opportunities that making university instructors design and deliver content online

A second key finding from this study was the motivation of university professors to create and provide online content within the framework of current practice. Three subthemes were included under this main theme: (a) eLearning education initiatives, (b) support and assistance, and (c) boosting awareness of online education.

Motivation: eLearning education initiative: The investigation discovered that the University of Gondar has taken an intriguing initiative to establish an ICT department that offers and streamlines the provision of specialized services and treatment required for university instructors to design and develop content online. The key informant said, "We are working to deliver well-organized online education for students, instructors, and administrative staff alike. To do this, we established an eLearning team in the ICT department to develop a new system and instruct trainees on the online education system to design online content." (Participant 9, key informant interview). Seemingly, another participant said, "To develop content online at this university, we have established a network with the ICT department. Everyone is aware that the health informatics department has been more attentive to eLearning

than other departments. The ICT staff has also offered technical assistance to us so that we may use it as well.” (participant 8, semi-structured interviewee). According to these findings, creating an eLearning support staff within the ICT department may make it easier for university instructors to become familiar with learning management systems and the technical support requirements for designing and developing content online.

Another participant mentioned, “...Every day, the word is dynamic. The way that education is delivered in universities has likewise undergone constant change. Therefore, we cannot disregard online learning. This is the end effect of globalization, the phenomenon of interconnectedness. We should adopt and implement online education if we want to compete with other universities throughout the world” (Participant 2, semi-structured interviewee). This research further demonstrates how globalization affected university lecturers based in universities in underdeveloped nations to launch an eLearning effort and get familiar with online learning. In addition, one participant revealed,

As of right now, this university doesn't have an eLearning or online education policy that would allow for the creation of online content. , The leadership is interested in enacting a new eLearning policy to supply online education and material in each college, faculty, institution, school, and department (Participant 7, key informant interview).

Similarly, one of the FGDs has attested to this argument and finding and it mentioned:

The incidence of COVID-19 in the world has influenced this university to pay attention to the development of an eLearning policy and the modification of educational policy to design and develop content online. This makes the instructional designers and university lecturers design content online at the university level (Group 2, FGD response).

Therefore, the University of Gondar's leadership and policymakers might use their initiatives to enact new eLearning policies as a chance to design and create online content at the academic level.

Motivation: Support and assistance: Another interesting initiative in the University of Gondar is the provision of specialized services and treatment necessary for all academic and admin staff about online education in general and content online in particular. Achievements in

this regard include support and assistance for university instructors. This was attested by the leadership as well as the ICT personnel who participated in the study. For instance, the University of Gondar has taken the initiative to offer a variety of online education services from different departments, according to 52% of university instructors, 35% of key informants, and 50% of the focus group discussions. Participants also noted that this university has trained eLearning champions who are now being on standby to offer training to the university instructors to deliver and facilitate the provision of online education services. One participant described, "According to what I've heard, this university has chosen eLearning champions in three departments who have attended Arizona State University's online education course. This circumstance encourages the departments to design content online at the university level" (Participant 6, semi-structured interview). In a similar vein, another FGD depicted,

All instructors at universities must have completed online education training. We anticipate that the ICT eLearning team and eLearning champions will offer assistance to all faculty members delivering online content at this university (Group 3, FGD response).

However, "The champions and the eLearning team would have a defined territory in which to deliver online content" (Participant 10, semi-structured interview). This result makes it clear that the University of Gondar may leverage its ICT eLearning team and eLearning champions to offer all university instructors comprehensive support services for delivering online content and instruction at the university level. But it draws a line between them when they provided eLearning instruction. This is so because instructional designers, who create online content, are the eLearning champions. The eLearning team, in contrast, is a group that offers technological and technical assistance to address content online in all departments.

Motivation: Boosting awareness of online education. Six (40%) of the 15 university instructors who participated in the semi-structured interviews, four (33.3%) of the 12 key informant participants, and two FGDS (50%) affirmed that the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, Arizona State University, and the University of Gondar have made In an effort to change

university instructors' attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs regarding the creation and design of online content. For example, one participant mentioned, "When we first encountered COVID-19 and I first started studying to become an instructional designer, it was difficult to comprehend online education and material. To address the difficulties of remote education, Arizona State University has now made a wide range of online education training courses available (Participant 3, semi-structured interviewee).

Besides, another participant further depicted, "...the University of Gondar is one of the public and private institutions to which the Ethiopian Ministry of Education has given special emphasis to delivering online education and material. For this step, it set up the relevant organizations to spread knowledge about how to use and implement online education and content for learning and monitor their projected implementation" (Participant 4, key informant interview). Another key informant also assured this idea in the context of the University of Gondar. He said, "A lot of information on online education has been shared by this university's public relations department on Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social media sites. This may involve educating university professors about how to create internet material" (Participant 10, semi-structured interview). Hence, setting the stage for gathering feedback, encouraging participative management, allowing people to ask questions, igniting ideas, and, most importantly, seeking understanding as to why you are doing it in the first place, can take advantage of the state or capacity to perceive, feel, or be aware of online learning and content at the University of Gondar.

Discussion

Despite numerous attempts to describe the difficulties and opportunities of e-learning in Ethiopia (Beyene & Beshir, 2018; Muhie et al., 2020), it is extremely difficult to research online content in this nation (Atnafu, 2015; Ethio Study, 2022). This problem reminds us to focus more on reading online content. And yet, small bodies of literature that do exist have numerous gaps

that warrant further investigations. For example, the studies of Fry et al. (2009), Tremblay et al. (2012), and the European Parliament (2015) have placed great focus on accepting online degree programmes as a basic strategy to promote university reform in higher-income nations. In addition, many studies conducted in Ethiopia focused on how students and instructors perceived e-learning (Seyoum, 2012; Tegegne, 2014); Nihuka & Voogt, 2011). These literary works, however, did not focus on the current difficulties faced by university instructors in creating and delivering online content, and they paid little attention to the extent to which content online has importance in addressing the educational gaps of minority groups in Ethiopia. This means the available study on the topic is limited, and many of them focused primarily on knowledge (Dai et al., 2020) and attitude (Ta'amneh, 2021) of information online seen as the challenges of it. In a nutshell, variables that have been identified in the previous research as important for predicting the challenges and prospects with content online were rarely evaluated simultaneously. Due to the necessity to create and offer information online to bring learning inclusion, equality, and equity to this university, this research project will fill these knowledge gaps by investigating the opportunities and difficulties faced by university instructors.

More specifically, at the University of Gondar, instructors face both interpersonal and institutional problems while creating and structuring online content. The University of Gondar often strives to execute online education without the auspices of eLearning policy. This practice can have devastating consequences for university instructors and leadership to design and develop content online. In addition, university instructors who are unable to comprehend and use technology have had a significant impact on how university instructors at the University of Gondar have not been able to generate and disseminate online content. In addition, a lack of understanding of the significance of content online utilized to connect with and interact with their target audience (students) in a manner that traditional media can't have brought a negative impact on how they design and generate content online at both a personal and institutional level. By providing them with training, one may address the problem of university instructors not

knowing how to generate and create content for online courses at the university level. These findings have received support from a large body of literature. For instance, Sife et al. (2007) asserted that a lack of training in online learning design and a lack of technology to use and execute in the design and creation of online content prevented university instructors from providing content online in institutions (Mor et al., 2015). Another challenge for university instructors in developing content online is they have neglected their reputations and created negative perceptions about eLearning due to a lack of technologies, electricity, and fast internet. This makes it challenging for them to carry out their duties as intended. This has had a commensurate impact on the University of Gondar's online content production and design. According to Anderson (2008), university teachers have issues with online content because of negative perceptions of online learning and apprehension about sharing low-quality material.

Additionally, this study discovered that when university professors assumed to build and develop content online, they started to become quite obsessed with faults. Beyond other technological and internet-related problems, these viewpoints give people a very low sense of self-worth and a lack of confidence in their capacity to create online content. In light of this, people can decide not to even try because they are terrified of failing. They just decide not to try at all because they are so afraid of failing that if they did, they would have to try and take the chance of suffering hurt, embarrassment, or disappointment. This could be a result of institutional changes brought on by inadequate infrastructures that have hampered the ability of teachers and students to provide online content at the University of Gondar. Other finding further guaranteed that poor infrastructure and instructional materials are also another instructor's obstacles to developing content online, including insufficient computers, limited server capacity, poor internet services, and unpredictable electricity in developing countries (Sife, 2007; Mtebe & Raisamo, 2011).

Concerning the prospects of university lecturers, this study found out that the University of Gondar's leadership and policymakers have initiatives to implement new eLearning policies

as an opportunity to design and create online content at the academic level. Additionally, this outcome demonstrates how the University of Gondar may use its ICT eLearning team and eLearning champions to provide all university instructors with thorough support services for delivering online instruction and content at the university level. But when they offered eLearning courses, a distinction was made between them. This is true because eLearning champions are instructional designers, who provide online content. In comparison, the eLearning team is a team that provides technical and technological support to address content online in all departments. Researchers found evidence for this conclusion. Mor et al. (2015) and Schmitz et al. (2017) have found that ICTs can provide students with new learning possibilities (e-Learning), improve teachers' professional capacities (e-Pedagogy), and build institutional capacity (e-Education). Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) have particularly evolved with tools and strategies for course administration and interaction of instructors and learners through a long line of changes, notably web-based apps that enable to both deliver and harvest knowledge (see also Unwin et al., 2010; Cavus, 2015).

The finding of the current study also showed that setting the stage for gathering feedback, encouraging participative management, allowing lecturers to ask questions, igniting ideas, and, most importantly, seeking understanding as to why they are doing it in the first place, can take as the prospect of the university lecturers to perceive, feel, or be aware of online learning and content at the University of Gondar using a broad set of information databases. Other researchers also assured that instructors have access to information through the web and information databases that can meet in a virtual space with other members and practitioner experts to discuss a wide range of issues and engage with other learners and practitioners in designing and developing content online (Sife et al., 2007; Nihuka & Voogt, 2011). All of these possibilities will benefit universities by allowing them to provide content online for learners in a given time and place (Aboderin, 2015).

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study examined the challenges and prospects of university instructors in designing and developing content online at the University of Gondar, Ethiopia. It shows that designing and producing content online in this university is still in its infancy, perhaps untouchable to address the problems of content online in particular and eLearning in general. The current study found that many university instructors have encountered a problem of technophobia in designing and developing online content. The findings of the current study also show that digital illiteracy, a lack of knowledge on how to design content online, a bad impression of content online, a fear of making low-quality content, and insufficient infrastructure are the daunting challenges instructors in producing online content at the University of Gondar, whereby eLearning education initiative, eLearning support services, boosting awareness of online education can take as the opportunities in designing content online.

The core recommendation of this study is that the University of Gondar should adopt an eLearning policy and include online education into the existing educational framework since these policies can mitigate the personal and institutional challenges in designing and developing content online in this university. Due to the problem's complexity and ubiquity, multiple researchers must work together. Further study is necessary to fully comprehend online content in light of the findings. Such research would allow policymakers to devise more effective micro-, meso-, and macro-level responses to minimize existing problems.

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Annex

Dear participants,

My name is Nahom Eyasu. I am an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Gondar, Ethiopia. I need to collect data from you in the research titled Challenges and Prospects of University Instructors in Designing and Delivering Content Online in Ethiopian Public Universities: Selected Departments at the University of Gondar in Focus. This research is often sponsored by Master Card Foundation. The results will be used to guide policies to encourage an e-learning system at the University of Gondar. Responding to the data should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. It may take up to 30 minutes for some individuals. You do not have to participate in this research, and if you do choose to participate, you may skip any question you are not comfortable answering and may exit this questionnaire at any time. There will be no consequences including physical and psychological harm to you if you choose not to complete the interview.

In addition, your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and at any time, your right to ask questions, your right not to answer any particular question they deem unworthy, your right to withdraw at any time, and that you may have withdrawn from the study with no penalty. Your answers will be completely confidential and anonymous. To maintain the confidentiality of participants' data, a numbering system will be implemented to refer to each participant. To be more confident you are not expected to write your name so that no one will be able to connect these with your interview answers. The results will be presented in summary form so no individual can be identified.

Thank you very much for your time!

Guidelines

1. Semi-structured and focus group discussants' interview guidelines
 - ✓ What are the challenges that university instructors face when it comes to developing and delivering content online?
 - learning styles and culture,
 - pedagogical e-learning, technology,
 - technical training,
 - time management challenges.
 - Instructor characteristics
 - Student characteristics
 - content development.

- pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)
- ✓ What opportunities do university instructors have as a result of the requirement to design and deliver content online?
- Technology
 - Administration
 - Academic
 - Culture
- ✓ To what extent do university instructors' challenges and opportunities in developing and delivering content online contribute to learning inclusion, equality, and equity?
- ✓ What recommendations could be given to administrators of HEIs and online program administrators to confront the challenges faced by faculty in the design and delivery of content online?
2. Key informant guidelines
- ✓ Form your experiences what are the challenges that university instructors face when it comes to developing and delivering content online?
- ✓ By your observation, what opportunities do university instructors have as a result of the requirement to design and deliver content online?
- ✓ From your training and observation, to what extent do university instructors' challenges and opportunities in developing and delivering content online contribute to learning inclusion, equality, and equity?
- ✓ What recommendations could be given to administrators of HEIs and online program administrators to confront the challenges faced by faculty in design and delivery of content online?