Viability of Intranets for Sustainable Architectural Education in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Federal University of Technology, Akure.

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Abstract

The on-going migration from traditional manual drafting to the use of CAD software for design studios has made the introduction of e-studios in Nigerian schools of Architecture more practicable. The gradual implementation of e-administration in Nigerian universities and the recent significant investment in networking infrastructure is creating an environment that can support the integration of virtual teaching, learning, administration and socialization platforms in our campuses. While such integration is commonplace in world-class universities, even seamlessly encompassing off-campus students, no Nigerian school of architecture has been able to fully overcome the financial, technological, infrastructural, personnel, and attitudinal constraints. Yet, reliable and secure access to data and network resources by all staff and students is essential for active collaboration and teamwork in today's highly competitive learning environments. This report documents the design concept, specifications and implementation of a viable intranet for sustainable architectural education in Nigeria using the Federal University of Technology, Akure as a case study. The conceptualization of the proposed intranet covers unique identification and categorization as well as secure authentication of staff, students, computers, devices and resources; contents and format of e-libraries; management of academic and administrative records; and e-learning resources including course materials, lecture notes, tutorials and training videos. Other aspects covered include socialization and collaboration, file and printer sharing, device and location independent access, interface consistency through mobile user profiles and promotion of self-proliferation through crowd sourcing. The paper details the specifications for the hardware, software and security model used in the pilot project. The phasing, current implementation status, challenges faced and the way forward are discussed. The success of the project was evident in enhanced collaboration, reliability and currency of information, cost effectiveness, higher efficiency and transparency. Recommendations include enhancement of technical support, enlightenment campaigns and training, and more robust safeguards and failovers to increase reliability.

Keywords: Architectural Education, E-library, E-learning, E-studio, Intranet
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Received: 2015/05/18
Accepted: 2015/06/12.
DOI http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/njtr.v10i1.S3