

Analysing Lecturers` Web/Internet Competence at the Zimbabwe Open University

By

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Abstract

This study aimed at assessing the extent to which tutors at the Zimbabwe Open University in Mashonaland East Region were internet/web competent and prepared to handle internet related correspondence through the ZOU-online facility. The lecturers were tested for competence in the use of the web/internet in handling and processing students` assignments as well as researching. A questionnaire, two tests and an interview schedule were used to collect data from respondents. The population for the study consisted of 14 fulltime and 51 part time lecturers from the 4 faculties of ZOU. Out of the sixty-five, a sample of 32 was chosen through stratified random sampling. Findings of the study show that while full time lecturers had access to computers, the majority of the part time tutors had no computer access. Despite the setback, the majority of the respondents in the sample, 58 (89%), was computer literate mostly in document production through word processing. Generally, lecturers at the Zimbabwe Open University lack the basic knowledge on the web/internet. Their poor performance in the tests demonstrates that the lecturers do not have the practical skills to undertake web/internet operations. The study recommended that all initial distance education programmes should include compulsory courses in ICT. Programmes should also be put in place for the capacity building for tutors' in internet/web usage which should be a priority if the ZOU on-line initiative is to be effective. Future employment prerequisites for lecturers, should include high levels of computer literacy from job seekers. Internet courses also need to be carried out. Part time tutors should be included in all initiatives to do with ICTs because they are indispensable to the system.

Key words: Lecturers, Web and Internet Competence, Information Communication Technology, Open and Distance Education, ZOU On-line