Awareness and readiness to participate in faculty learning communities and e-resources utilisation among academics of Adeleke University, Ede, Nigeria

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Abstract
The study investigated awareness and readiness to participate in faculty learning communities (FLCs) and e-resources utilisation among academics of Adeleke University, Ede, Nigeria. Survey design was adopted with population of 173 academics in six faculties (arts, basic medical sciences, business and social sciences, sciences, engineering and law) in 2021/2022 academic session of the University. Out of whom 108 selected based on Research Advisors Sample Size Table (2006). A self-developed instrument tagged: 'Academic Staff Awareness and Readiness of FLCs Questionnaire (ASARF)' was condensed to Google form for easy participation via the WhatsApp. The findings indicated a high level of awareness and readiness to participate in FLCs with wider access to online resources and social media needed for effective FLCs activities. The potential challenges noted included the need for institutional support and membership commitment to participate in FLCs. While the need to creating institutional policy on FLCs adoption was suggested.

Keywords: Awareness, e-resources, faculty learning communities, readiness, academics

Introduction

One of the ways of improving teaching and learning activities in universities and colleges is through the formation and operations of faculty learning communities (FLCs.). Faculty learning communities are small groups of faculty members who meet on a regular basis to discuss certain subjects, concerns, or practices with the purpose of enhancing the teaching and learning process within a faculty. The concept is intended to provide required encouragement, support, and reflection among faculty members who participate within the one-year long programme. The goal of a FLC is to bring together faculty members from various disciplines and ranks to debate important topics in teaching and learning. The purpose is to create a university-wide community dedicated to better understanding and applying teaching and learning skills like pedagogy, assessment, inclusive teaching techniques, and course design. As a result, instructors who participate in FLCs perform better, are more enthusiastic about teaching, and their participation in a learning community has been connected to improved student learning outcomes (Banasick & Dean, 2016). FLC is characterised as a cross-disciplinary faculty and staff group of 6 to 15 members who participate in a year-long active, collaborative program with a curriculum focused on improving teaching and learning, as well as frequent seminars and activities that provide learning, development, teaching, scholarship, and community building (Mi, 2015).

Literature has shown that in institutions with active FLCs their curriculums are organized around two basic principles; cohort-based and topic based (Pelemo, 2020 & Cox, 2017). A cohort-based FLC is made up of a group of faculty

members who have decided to stay together for a year in the learning community. The group determines what topics and types of engagements they want over time, so the topics of teaching, learning, and professional development are not fixed. A mid-year evaluation may be important to get insight into the group members' particular needs and perspectives. This makes future planning easier and gives a way to deal with group dynamics. A community of junior academics deciding on discussion subjects such as tenure and promotion or other new faculty challenges is an example of a cohort-based organization (Cox, 2017)

On the other hand, topic-based FLC is built around a topic that is relevant to campus teaching and learning. These communities might be designed to be long-term or short-term in nature. They address concerns and possibilities related to unique campus teaching and learning demands. Online teaching and learning, general scholarship of teaching and learning, scholarship of teaching and learning on the impact of instructional technology, and collaborative technology are all examples of topic-based FLCs. Individuals with particular understanding on the issue usually lead topic-based FLCs (Pelemo, 2020). The need for robust awareness of the concept and its capabilities is also germane.

The term awareness as viewed by Olaojo and Oyeboade, (2021) refers to a general perception or consciousness of something without a thorough grasp of it. It describes the state of being conscious of a situation or event. It's the most fundamental level of understanding, meaning the ability to directly know and be aware of events. Individuals that have a high level of awareness are better able to make appropriate judgments and decisions, as well as perform at a high level

The major goal of awareness is to draw the individual's attention to the message in order to elicit understanding. Awareness can be attained in a variety of ways, both formal and informal. All forms of mass media education, such as television, radio, and newspapers, are common ways for checking awareness. Classes, lectures, orientation and awareness sessions, training programs, seminars, and tutorials are all examples of traditional pedagogical teaching approaches. Reading books, visiting the library, and collecting information from friends, family, and other human sources are all examples of personal or independently acquired awareness. Informational posts and adverts on various social media platforms, blogs, bulletin boards, websites, video platforms, and so on make up the extra cyber-component. The level of awareness could be high or low (Dunmade, 2022). In the context of this study, therefore, awareness is regarded as the academic staff level of consciousness and knowledge of the existence, activities and duration of faculty learning communities (FLCs).

An individual's entire readiness to participate in an activity or situation is characterized as readiness (Dangol&Shrestha, 2019). In the context of this study, readiness refers to an academic staff member's willingness and ability to participate in Faculty learning community activities on a physical, mental, and emotional level. It also affords the participants with the opportunity to make a robust and judicious use of electronic resources since the FLCs may be internet-enabled. Electronic resources are materials that require access through a computer,

whether it's a personal computer, a mainframe, or a handheld mobile device. They can be accessible locally or remotely via the Internet. E-journals, e-books, full-text (aggregated) databases, indexing and abstracting databases, reference databases (biographies, dictionaries, directories, encyclopedias, and so on), numeric and statistical databases, pictures, and audio/visual resources are some of the most commonly encountered categories of electronic resources (IFLA, 2012).

Any work encoded and made available for access through the use of a computer is defined as an electronic resource in support of the preceding definition. It includes electronic data that can be accessed remotely and directly (fixed media). In other words, the usage of electronic resources via computer networks is referred to as remote access (electronic resources). The usage of electronic resources via carriers (discs/disks, cassettes, cartridges) meant to be placed into a computerized device or its associated equipment is referred to as direct access (electronic resources (Madondo, Chisita, &Sithole, 2017).

Faculties are expected to learn and grow intellectually in a public context, which is the challenge embedded in FLCs. However, research shows that instructors who fully participate in a learning community have a greater understanding of and adaptability with educational tactics. Faculties acquire a deeper grasp of the school because most FLCs have faculty from a variety of fields. Despite the multiple benefits and capacity to solve identified teaching and learning challenges, preliminary inquiry revealed that Adeleke University Ede has not established or

formed any Faculty learning communities within its faculties. There are no policies in place at the university regarding the development and operation of Faculty learning communities despite the inherent benefits. Thus, the need to investigate awareness and readiness of Adeleke University teaching staff to participate in FLCs and implication on their e-resources utilisation.

Historical development of Adeleke University Ede, Osun State,Nigeria
Adeleke University, an individually-owned higher institution of learning is situated in Ede, a town in Osun State, Southwest Nigeria. The university is founded by Dr Tajudeen Adedeji Adeleke, the financier of Springtime Development Foundation (SDF), a charitable, non-profit organization founded to assist indigent, but brilliant students to read to university level. The University is model around Seventh-Day Adventist principle and philosophy (albeit it is not owned and/or controlled by the Seventh-day Adventist Church). It belongs to the Seventh-day Adventist educational system, the second-largest Christian school system in the world.

The University was founded in 2011 to nurture graduates with better traits that can help them to optimize their contribution to God through the Church and society at large. The University offers equal opportunity to all competent applicants and does not discriminate irrespective of gender, race, religion, colour, or ethnic heritage. Under the auspices of six faculties, the university currently offers a number of undergraduate and graduate programmes leading to bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees with full National Universities Commission accreditation. These faculties

include arts, basic medical sciences, business and social sciences, engineering, law and science (AU Student Handbook, 2016).

Objectives of the study

The primary objective of the study was to investigate awareness and readiness to participate in faculty learning communities and e-resources utilisation among the academics of Adeleke University. Specifically, the study sought to:
1. determine the level of awareness of faculty learning communities among the academics;
2. ascertain the academics' readiness to participate in faculty learning communities;
3. determine level of e-resources utilisation for faculty learning communities among the academics;
4. identify the inherent challenges of participating in faculty learning communities among the academics.

Research questions

The following questions were raised for the study:
1. What is the level of awareness of faculty learning communities academics of Adeleke University, Ede?
2. What is the teaching staff readiness to participate in faculty learning communities among the academics?
3. What is the level of e-resources use for faculty learning communities among the academics?

4. What are the inherent challenges of participating in faculty learning communities among the academics?

Literature review

Through a faculty learning community that was established by and facilitated by librarians, Mi (2015) performed a study to explore the role of librarians. He conducted his research at Oakland University Beaumont School of Medicine in the United States. Based on the results of his research, he came to the conclusion that an FLC established and guided by a librarian resulted in the establishment of another FLC in medical schools in 2013 that concentrated on the use of learning theories to direct educational research. The study concluded that when librarians initiate and facilitate FLCs, they are likely to encourage the creation of further FLCs in colleges and schools nearby.

In the same vein, Pelemo (2020) investigated how Osun State University's FLCs' use of the library as a tool for high-quality teaching and learning. The study employed a survey research design and gave out forty-five (45) questionnaires to thirty (30) randomly selected library patrons and fifteen (15) librarians. According to the study's findings, librarians play a significant role in FLCs and have a significant impact on how well those FLCs perform. The author reported that, pressure to manage change, the high cost of digitizing local resources, and a lack of ICT tools for quick information retrieval are among problems facing librarians who work with FLCs.

Hamzat (2019) analysed the use of FLCs for enhancing library and information science education in Nigeria. The author

concluded that FLCs remain an inherently social space where scholars can work with each other to generate and share knowledge towards enhancing teaching and learning. Gordon and Foutz (2015) studied the teaching requirements and other issues of interest to an interdisciplinary group of instructors using a topic-based FLC named "Your First First-Year Odyssey."Faculty from various fields and with different levels of experience working with first-year students made up the FLC membership. An oral interview protocol's content analysis suggests that faculty members are more intently focused on their objectives and level of readiness for teaching freshmen. Particularly, participants whose primary reason for teaching the course was to interact with incoming students shifted their attention during the course of the semester to developing pedagogical tactics that would increase student involvement in the course. The findings imply that the major themes that emerged from this research could be used to frame future faculty support for the new programme.

A faculty learning community was described as a professional development strategy for academics in an English-medium university in the United Arab Emirates in the study by Engin and Atkinson (2015). The authors explained how many faculty members were uncertain about their pedagogy as a result of the adoption of iPads as a new learning and teaching device. The findings showed that the FLC partially met the requirements for an efficient professional development (PD) in the study.There were drawbacks and disadvantages as well, with a common theme among participants being that the community would function better if it had

more participants. The participants were focused on a shared goal that was timely and hence instantly meaningful to them because the community was explicitly focused on iPads and their immediate usage in the classroom. The subjects discussed were placed within the framework of the participants' actual practices as well as the mission and objectives of the university.The participant also felt the blog to be helpful since it allowed them to express ideas and experiences outside of the community's set meeting times, which boosted the activity's timeliness. The community felt a need to discover solutions as a result of the frequent descriptions of difficulties in the blogs and meetings. The conversation was also influenced by the requirement for a solution arising from common issues, a trait that is essential under a constrained time frame.

Methods
A descriptive survey design was used with population of 173 academics (teaching staff) in the six faculties (arts, science, business and social sciences, basic medical sciences, engineering and law) as at 2021/2022 academic session. Research Advisors Sample Size Table (2006) was employed to arrive at sample size of108 participants. A self-structured questionnaire entitled: 'Academic Staff Awareness and Readiness of FLCs Questionnaire (ASARF)' with six sub-scales was employed for data gathering. The first section of the instrument focused on demographic characteristics of the respondents, Section B on the participants' awareness of FLCs, Section C on academic's readiness to participate in FLCs, Section D electronic resources needed for FLC activities while oninherent challenges of participating in Faculty learning

communities. The questionnaire used was subjected to reliability test at Al-Hikman University, Ilorin and the reliability co-efficient indicated 0.87 level of reliability which was considered adequate.

Application was made to Adeleke University authorities before administering the instrument through the Office Research, Grant and Linkages (ORGL) of the University (The unit saddled with the responsibility of ensuring ethics in research within the University). With the approval, Google form was thereafter employed to administer the questionnaire on the teaching staff since they are all registered with the ORGL office using their WhatsApp. By 29th

June 2022, 89 responses were recorded in the Google form and this accounted for 86.4% of the required sample.The data collected were then analysed using frequency count, percentages, mean, standard deviation and the results presented in Tables 1-5.

Results and discussion

The analysed demographic data of the respondents are in Table 1 while the data used to answer the research questions are presented in Tables 2 -5. The sub-section contained the socio-demographic characteristics of the study's participants and the results can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

Gender	Freq.	Percentage
Male	41	46.07
Female	48	53.93
Age Range	**Freq.**	**Percentage**
20 – 30	3	3.37
31 – 40	15	16.85
41 – 50	39	43.82
51 – 60	29	32.58
61 and above	3	3.37
Qualification	**Freq.**	**Percentage**
Bsc/B.A/B.Ed/B.Eng/B.Tech	11	12.36
MSc/MA/M.Eng/M.Ed/Mphil	45	50.56
PhD	33	37.08
Faculty	**Freq.**	**Percentage**
Arts	7	7.87
Basic Medical Sciences	8	8.99
Business and Social Sciences	35	39.33
Engineering	19	21.35
Law	9	10.11
Science	11	12.36

Designation/rank	Freq.	Percentage
Graduate Assistant	6	6.74
Assistant Lecturer	10	11.24
Lecturer II	15	16.85
Lecturer I	17	19.10
Senior Lecturer	19	21.35
Associate Professor	11	12.36
Professor	11	12.36

The results on socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents as presented in Table 1 indicated that 48 (53.93%) are females. In terms of age range, the bracket with least respondents are 20-30 years and 61 and above years each with frequency of 3.37%. The age range with the highest frequency - 39(43.82%)- is 41-50 years. A majority of the respondents (50.56%) have master's degrees. The Faculty of Business and Social Sciences has the largest percentage of respondents (39.33%), while the Faculty of Arts and University Library have the lowest percentage of respondents (7.87% each).According to the results, Graduate Assistant has the lowest frequency among the respondents (6%) and Senior Lecturer has the highest frequency (19%).

Research question 1: What is the level of awareness of faculty learning communities academics of Adeleke University, Ede?

The data in Table 2 are used to answer this question.

Table 2: Awareness of faculty learning communities

Awareness statements	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std	Criterion $\bar{x}$	Remark
I am aware that faculty learning communities (FLCs) exist in some universities	21	33	21	14	2.69	2.35	2.5	High
I am aware that FLCs are programs in which faculty members share knowledge and skills	24	63	19	7	3.74	2.81	2.5	High
I am aware that FLCs usually last for period of one (1) year	17	29	23	20	2.48	2.18	2.5	High
I am aware that FLCs is a cross-disciplinary programme	19	38	18	14	2.70	2.35	2.5	High
I am aware that FLCs are meant to improve teaching and research skills of faculty members	27	36	19	7	2.93	2.55	2.5	High
Weighted $\bar{x}$					**2.90**			

The analysis on awareness level of the respondents towards FLCs showed that all the respondents expressed agreement with the assertions based on the findings in Table 2. The mean of each of the five Likert scale items are higher than the criterion x̄ (2.50). According to the criteria, (x̄ < criterion x̄ = low level of awareness while x̄ >= criterion x̄ = high level of awareness). This result demonstrated that Adeleke University's academic staff members are highly aware of faculty learning communities since the weighted x̄ is greater than the Criterion x̄.

This finding agrees with the finding of Olalade (2022) in which the author described high level of awareness as an individual's motivating factor to participate in an activity or situation.

Research question 2: What is the level of readiness to participate in faculty learning communities among academics of Adeleke University Ede?

The data in Table 3 are used to answer this question.

Table 3: Readiness to participate in faculty learning communities

Readiness statements	SA	A	D	SD	x̄	Std	Criterion x̄	Remark
My work schedules will allow me to participate in faculty learning communities	26	41	14	8	2.96	2.57	2.5	High
I am always willing to share my experience and skills with my colleagues	20	69	0	0	3.22	2.71	2.5	High
Participation in faculty learning communities should be considered in staff promotion and recognition	23	49	9	8	2.98	2.57	2.5	High
Nature and activities of the Faculty learning communities will determine my active participation	29	37	17	6	3.00	2.61	2.5	High
I would prefer intra-faculty learning communities instead of interfaculty learning communities	21	39	11	7	2.58	2.39	2.5	High
Weighted x̄					**2.95**			

The analysis on readiness to participate in FLCs show that the x̄ of each of the Likert scale item is above the Criterion x̄ (2.50), based on the criteria (x̄<criterion x̄ = low level of readiness and x̄ >= criterion x̄ = high level of readiness), the statement are considered true. The weighted x̄ is also higher than the criterion x̄, indicating that academic staff members are generally quite prepared to participate in FLCs. This finding

is in line with that of Dangol and Shrestha (2019) where they reported that readiness is a critical indicator of learners' performance.

Research question 3: What is the level of e-resources use for faculty learning communities among academics?

The data in Table 4 are used to answer this question.

Table 4: E-resources needed for faculty learning communities

E-resources needed statements	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std.	Criterion $\bar{x}$	Remark
The library will need to provide wider access to online resources to support the activities faculty learning communities	25	44	11	9	2.96	2.57	2.50	Needed
The library should provide designated space for activities (seminars, presentations etc.) of faculty learning communities	18	39	17	14	2.66	2.33	2.50	Needed
Activities of faculty learning communities should be done in dual mode (virtual and physical) to enable members participate from any where	23	37	19	8	2.80	2.45	2.50	Needed
Social media platforms should be incorporated to enhance the activities of faculty learning communities	25	33	16	13	2.74	2.44	2.50	Needed
Weighted $\bar{x}$					**2.79**			

The outcome in Table 4 shows that each item's $\bar{x}$ is higher than the criterion $\bar{x}$ (2.50), indicating that each item is required for FLC activities. Additionally, the fact that the weighted $\bar{x}$ (2.79) is higher than the criterion $\bar{x}$ (2.50) indicates that the items are generally needed for FLCs. This finding also corroborates the findings of Nugent, Smith, Rhodes, Zander and Carter (2008) in which they discovered that technology, especially social media platforms, are deployed to improve the activities of FLCs, and that participants reported increased performance especially in cohort-based FLCs.

Research question 4: What are the inherent challenges of participating in faculty learning communities among academics?

The data in Table 5 are used to answer this question.

Table 5: Challenges of participating in faculty learning communities

Challenges	Yes/True	No/False	Total
Institutional support	84 (94.38%)	5 (5.62%)	89 (100%)
Members commitment	86 (96.63%)	4 (3.37)	89 (100%)
Funding and logistics	58 (65.17%)	32 (34.84%)	89 (100%)
Duration of the program (1 years)	51 (57.30%)	38(42.70%)	89 (100%)
Inadequate ICT skills among members	71 (78.66%)	19 (21.35%	89 (100%)
Incentives	69 (77.53%)	20 (22.47%)	89 (100%)
Colleagues willingness to share knowledge	79 (88.76%)	10 (11.24%)	89 (100%)
Conflict between or among colleagues	78 (87.64%)	11 (12.36%)	89 (100%)

The findings on inherent challenges as presented in Table 5 reveal that participants commitment is a significant potential challenge for FLCs (96.63%), whereas the duration of the programme (1 years) is the least challenging factor (57.30%).

Conclusion
Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that there is high level of awareness of Faculty learning communities among teaching staff of Adeleke University, Ede. A high level of readiness to participate in faculty learning communities was also demonstrated by the academic staff. This has positive implication on their use of e-resources to complement information gathered and the new knowledge acquired through their involvement in FLCs for knowledge sharing Wider access to Internet resources and the inclusion of social media are suggested as the needed e-resources for FLCs. Potential challenges of FLCs include institutional support and membership commitment.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:
1. The institution may think about creating a policy to direct and support the establishment and involvement of faculty members given the high degree of awareness and readiness to participate in FLCs among its teaching staff.
2. Academic staff members also expressed a preference for interfaculty groups, and the university may take this into account when creating FLCs.
3. In order for FLCs to have a strong foundation for their activities and programs, membership commitment should be actively encouraged.

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