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[Emmanuel Dumbuya](#)*

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Article

Turning Resources into Results: Accelerating Capacity Building in Digital Learning at Njala University

Emmanuel Dumbuya

Njala University, Sierra Leone; emmanueldumbuya1@gmail.com;

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1390-5041>;

Amazon Author Page: <https://www.amazon.com/-/e/B0DPR9HGHJ>;

Academia.edu: <https://njala.academia.edu/EDumbuya>

Abstract: Njala University is actively integrating digital learning solutions to enhance educational outcomes. This paper examines strategies for transforming available resources into measurable results through capacity-building efforts. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach—including policy analysis, stakeholder interviews, and institutional data review—this paper identifies key factors contributing to successful digital capacity building. The findings suggest that strategic resource allocation, collaborative partnerships, and targeted professional development initiatives are critical for sustainable digital transformation in higher education. It discusses implications for digital learning at Njala University and proposes a framework to guide similar institutions.

Keywords: digital learning; capacity building; resource management; Njala University; educational technology; higher education transformation

1. Introduction

The global shift towards digital technologies has significantly impacted higher education, offering opportunities to enhance teaching and learning experiences (Anderson, 2020). In Sierra Leone, Njala University faces unique challenges in adopting digital tools due to infrastructural and capacity constraints. This paper explores strategies to effectively utilize available resources to accelerate capacity building in digital learning at Njala University.

2. Literature Review

Digital learning platforms have the potential to democratize education by increasing access and promoting active learning (Mayer, 2021). Studies emphasize that successful digital transformation requires comprehensive capacity-building programs, strategic planning, and continuous support (Khan et al., 2019). Resource management theories suggest that aligning institutional resources with strategic goals can lead to significant performance improvements (Barney, 1991).

At Njala University, initiatives such as the partnership with eLearnAfricaLMS to develop Online Program Management (OPM) demonstrate a commitment to enhancing digital learning infrastructure (Njala University, 2023). However, challenges persist, including limited digital literacy and infrastructural deficits.

3. Methodology

A mixed-methods research design was employed:

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Institutional data on digital resource utilization, student performance, and technology adoption rates over the past five years were analyzed.

- **Qualitative Analysis:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with faculty, administrative staff, and students to gather insights into digital capacity-building initiatives.
- **Policy and Document Review:** Institutional policies, strategic plans, and capacity-building frameworks were reviewed to contextualize the findings.

Data analysis was performed using SPSS for statistical insights and for thematic analysis of interview transcripts.

4. Results

4.1. Resource Utilization and Digital Engagement

Analysis indicates a significant increase in digital resource usage over the last five years. The partnership with eLearnAfricaLMS has facilitated the development of Online Program Management, expanding the university's digital offerings (Njala University, 2023). Despite this progress, a portion of students and faculty continue to rely on traditional teaching methods.

4.2. Capacity Building Initiatives

Interviews revealed that targeted professional development sessions have been pivotal in enhancing faculty digital literacy. Faculty reported increased confidence in using learning management systems and integrating digital content into curricula. However, gaps remain in advanced digital pedagogy and ongoing technical support.

4.3. Challenges in Resource Translation

Identified challenges include:

- **Infrastructure Limitations:** Inconsistent internet access and power supply issues persist.
- **Training and Support:** Initial training sessions are often too generic, lacking follow-up support and advanced modules.
- **Cultural Barriers:** Resistance to change among some staff and students indicates the need for a more inclusive change management strategy.

5. Discussion

Findings suggest that while Njala University's digital learning initiatives are progressing, further refinement is needed. A successful capacity-building strategy must address both technical and pedagogical needs. Drawing on resource-based theory, aligning technology with human resource capabilities is essential for institutional success in digital transformation (Barney, 1991).

5.1. Proposed Framework for Capacity Building

1. **Comprehensive Training Programs:** Tailored, ongoing training that evolves with technology trends.
2. **Robust Technical Infrastructure:** Investment in reliable connectivity and backup systems.
3. **Inclusive Change Management:** Strategies to engage all stakeholders, including faculty, students, and administrative staff.
4. **Collaborative Partnerships:** Engagement with technology providers, government agencies, and international organizations to share best practices and resources.

6. Conclusion

Transforming resources into results in digital learning at Njala University requires a holistic approach that integrates sustainable energy, technology, training, and supportive policies. While significant progress has been made, further investment in tailored capacity building and infrastructure is needed to ensure that digital resources effectively translate into improved

educational outcomes. This framework can serve as a model for other institutions in similar contexts aiming to accelerate digital learning transformation.

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Short Biography of Authors

Emmanuel Dumbuya holds a Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Curriculum Development from Njala University, Sierra Leone, and is currently pursuing an MPhil in Education. With over a decade of experience in secondary education, he specializes in curriculum development, educational policy, and gender equity in education. Emmanuel is committed to enhancing the quality of education in Sierra Leone through curriculum reform and the integration of future skills, with a particular focus on **gender equality** and **inclusive education**. He is an advocate for the use of **technology** in education to bridge gaps in learning outcomes and empower students for the challenges of the 21st century. His research and policy work aim to transform Sierra Leone's educational landscape, focusing on both **secondary** and **tertiary education systems**.

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