

Enablements and Impediments to Students' Sustained Use of Blackboard in a Historically Disadvantaged Institution

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ABSTRACT This study investigated enablers of and constraints to students' use of Blackboard. It used Archer's social realist perspective to explore structural, cultural, and agential influences that bear on students' use of Blackboard, a Learning Management System. A qualitative approach using a survey design informed the investigation. Data were sourced through an online open-ended questionnaire obtained from a group of 100 students who were selected purposively. The content analyses of students' narrative responses involved the extraction of themes. Culturally, the study revealed that not all lecturers across the levels of the qualifications made courses available online, even though students keep appealing for the use of Blackboard for all courses. Structural issues uncovered related to network failure, compatibility with other devices, and the maintenance of computer hardware. It also emerged that some of the students exercised their agency in making Blackboard usable on their own gadgets, overcoming personal fears, in acquiring proficiency in the use of Blackboard. This paper concludes that the students' voice and perspective in the sustained use of technology is necessary to mitigate teaching and learning challenges for the benefit of learning. It is recommended that lecturers give students opportunities to exercise their agency to confront structural and cultural challenges they experience in the use of Blackboard.