ASSESSMENT OF FLIPGRID DISCUSSION PLATFORM FOR UNDERGRADUATES' ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT AND PERFOMANCE IN UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN

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Abstract

The integration of digital learning tools has reshaped higher education, with platforms like Flipgrid fostering interactive discussions and enhancing student engagement. Despite its growing adoption, there is limited empirical research on its effectiveness in promoting academic engagement, particularly among undergraduates at the University of Ilorin. This study addresses this gap by assessing student engagement with Flipgrid, its impact on academic performance and critical thinking, strategies for equitable access, and the technical challenges students face while using the platform. Findings revealed active engagement in discussions and group collaborations, though feedback seeking from peers and instructors remains limited. Flipgrid was perceived as beneficial for enhancing academic performance and critical thinking, particularly in analyzing perspectives, though its impact on students' ability to articulate and defend ideas was moderate. Technical barriers and accessibility issues, including internet connectivity challenges, device limitations, and navigation difficulties, were identified. To optimize Flipgrid's effectiveness, respondents highlighted the need for comprehensive training sessions, technical support, and equitable access strategies. Based on these findings, the study recommends expanding training programs, enhancing technical support, and ensuring students have access to necessary digital resources. By bridging the research gap on Flipgrid's role in student engagement at the University of Ilorin, this study provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and technology developers in improving the implementation of digital learning platforms in higher education.

Keywords: Academic Performance Critical Thinking, , Digital Learning Flipgrid, Student Engagement,

Introduction

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education has revolutionized teaching and learning processes across the globe. ICT encompasses a wide range of tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store, and manage information. In higher education, ICT plays a crucial role in enhancing student engagement, facilitating access to learning resources, and promoting interactive learning environments. With the advancement of digital technology, various platforms have emerged to support online learning, one of which is Flipgrid (Lowenthal & Moore, 2020). Flipgrid is an educational technology platform that emerged as a response to the need for more interactive and student-centered learning environments. Developed by a group of educators at the University of Minnesota in 2014, Flipgrid was designed to facilitate video discussions among students, enabling them to express their ideas and engage in meaningful conversations asynchronously (Nesmith, 2014). Flipgrid is an innovative video discussion platform that allows educators to create grids to facilitate video-based discussions among students. Each grid can contain multiple topics, where students can record and upload short video responses. This tool aims to enhance student engagement by providing a more dynamic and interactive way for students to share their thoughts and ideas. The platform has gained significant traction in educational settings due to its user-friendly interface and ability to foster a sense of community among learners.

One of the primary benefits of Flipgrid is its capacity to promote active learning. According to Green and Green (2018), the use of voice and video in online discussions can significantly enhance student participation and engagement. Flipgrid encourages students to articulate their responses verbally, which can help improve their communication skills and confidence. Additionally, the platform's visual and auditory elements make learning more engaging compared to traditional text-based discussions. Although, the use of Flipgrid is not without few challenges, as some students may feel self-conscious or anxious about recording videos, which can hinder their participation. Technical issues such as internet connectivity and device compatibility can also pose barriers to the effective use of the platform. Moreover, there is a learning curve associated with mastering the technical aspects of Flipgrid, which may require additional support and training for both students and educators.

Despite the challenges, the Utilization of Flipgrid among students varies depending on several factors, including their familiarity with technology, the course content, and the instructor's approach to integrating the platform into the curriculum. Research by Sharoff, (2022) highlights that student expressed that VoiceThread allowed their voices to be heard and felt more connected to their colleagues. This collaborative tool enhanced learner engagement and a sense of community. VoiceThread was integrated into two asynchronous online business courses enhancing active learning and student engagement improving the online community culture. However, the success of such tools largely depends on how they are implemented and the level of support provided to students. In the context of the study, Flipgrid has been introduced to enhance academic engagement among undergraduates. The university has recognized the potential of this platform to create more interactive and engaging learning experiences. By allowing students to participate in video-based discussions, the platform aims to promote deeper understanding and critical thinking skills. The use of Flipgrid aligns with the university's broader goals of integrating ICT into its teaching and learning processes to improve educational outcomes.

Furthermore, Flipgrid supports diverse learning styles and can cater to students who may struggle with traditional text-based discussions. According to Lowenthal & Moore, (2020), encouraging critical thinking in online threaded discussions can be challenging, but tools like Flipgrid can help overcome these challenges by providing a more engaging and interactive platform. The visual and auditory elements of video responses can aid in better comprehension and retention of information. Flipgrid offers a promising solution to the challenges of student engagement in online learning environments. Its ability to facilitate interactive and dynamic discussions makes it a valuable tool for educators looking to enhance their teaching strategies. However, the successful implementation of Flipgrid requires careful planning, support, and training to ensure that both students and educators can maximize its potential.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing integration of digital learning tools in higher education has transformed how students engage in academic discussions and collaborative learning. Among these tools, Flipgrid has emerged as a widely used video-based discussion platform designed to enhance student engagement, foster critical thinking, and support interactive learning experiences. However, despite its growing adoption, there is limited empirical research on its effectiveness in promoting academic engagement among undergraduates, particularly at the University of Ilorin. Key concerns include the extent of students' engagement with Flipgrid, its impact on academic performance and critical thinking skills, and whether it effectively supports learning outcomes. Additionally, equitable access poses a challenge, as differences in digital literacy, internet connectivity, and technological resources may hinder some students from benefiting fully. Technical difficulties, such as video upload issues, navigation challenges, and device compatibility problems, may further limit participation and reduce Flipgrid's effectiveness as a learning tool. Addressing these challenges is essential to optimizing its use in higher education. Given these gaps, this study seeks to assess the level of students' engagement with Flipgrid, evaluate its impact on academic performance and critical thinking, explore strategies for equitable access, and identify technical challenges faced by students at the University of Ilorin. The findings will provide insights into improving Flipgrid's effectiveness in digital learning.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to assess Flipgrid discussion platform for undergraduates' academic engagement and performance in University of Ilorin. Specifically, the study seeks to;

1. assess the level of undergraduates' engagement with the Flipgrid discussion platform at the University of Ilorin.
2. evaluate the impact of Flipgrid on undergraduates' academic performance and critical thinking skills.

3. explore strategies to support equitable access and effective use of Flipgrid among undergraduates.
4. identify the technical challenges faced by undergraduates in using Flipgrid and propose solutions to overcome these barriers

Research Questions

1. What is the undergraduates' level of engagement with the Flipgrid discussion platform at the University of Ilorin?
2. What is the impact of Flipgrid on undergraduates' academic performance and critical thinking skills?
3. What strategies can be implemented to support equitable access and effective use of Flipgrid among all undergraduates?
4. What technical challenges do undergraduates face when using Flipgrid, and how can these be addressed?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey of research design. This method was chosen for the study as it can provide information for the study without manipulation of the variables. The population of the study consists of all undergraduates in the University of Ilorin. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents for the study. A researcher designed questionnaire was used in gathering relevant data for the study. The instrument contained three (3) sections, with five (5) items each and One (1) section with two (2) items which was administered to undergraduates in the school. The data gathered were analyzed using descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation on SPSS 24.0 Statistical Package.

Results

Research Question One: What is the undergraduates' level of engagement with the Flipgrid discussion platform at the University of Ilorin?

Table 1: Level of Engagement of Undergraduates with the Flipgrid discussion platform at the University of Ilorin

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D.	Remark
1	I actively participate in Flipgrid discussions to enhance my understanding of course material.	3.54	0.74	Agreed
2	I regularly watch and respond to my peers' video contributions on Flipgrid.	3.47	0.62	Agreed
3	I use Flipgrid to collaborate with classmates on group assignments and projects.	3.44	0.82	Agreed
4	I find Flipgrid to be a valuable tool for practicing and improving my presentation skills.	3.27	0.80	Agreed
5	I seek feedback on Flipgrid from my instructors and peers to improve my academic performance.	2.99	0.45	Agreed
	Aggregate mean	**2.89**	**0.91**	

As shown on Table 1, the respondents agreed that they are actively engaged with the Flipgrid discussion platform at the University of Ilorin. The highest level of engagement is seen in active participation in discussions to enhance understanding of course material, with respondents also regularly watching and responding to peers' video contributions. Additionally, Flipgrid is used for collaboration on group assignments and projects, and it is considered a valuable tool for practicing and improving presentation skills. However, seeking feedback on Flipgrid from instructors and peers to improve academic performance is less frequently practiced, indicating that while engagement is generally high, there may be room for improvement in leveraging the platform for feedback.

Research Question Two: What is the impact of Flipgrid on students' academic performance and critical thinking skills?

Table 2: Impact of Flipgrid on students' academic performance and critical thinking skills

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D.	Remark
1	Flipgrid has helped me improve my academic performance by encouraging active participation in discussions.	3.21	0.85	Agreed
2	My use of Flipgrid has enhanced my ability to analyze and evaluate different perspectives.	2.74	1.35	Agreed
3	Flipgrid has contributed to my development of critical thinking skills by promoting reflective responses.	3.23	0.78	Agreed
4	Engaging with Flipgrid discussions has improved my ability to articulate and defend my ideas.	2.75	1.15	Agreed
5	The feedback I receive on Flipgrid has positively influenced my academic growth and critical thinking abilities.	2.58	1.42	Agreed
	Aggregate mean	**2.93**	**0.94**	

Table 2 revealed that Flipgrid positively impacts undergraduates' academic performance and critical thinking skills. They indicated that Flipgrid encourages active participation in discussions, which helps improve academic performance. Additionally, Flipgrid contributes to the development of critical thinking skills by promoting reflective responses and enhancing the ability to analyze and evaluate different perspectives. However, while the feedback received on Flipgrid influences academic growth, it is noted that the impact on articulating and defending ideas, as well as the overall enhancement of critical thinking abilities, shows moderate engagement, suggesting further opportunities for maximizing the platform's potential.

Research Question Three: What strategies can be implemented to support equitable access and effective use of Flipgrid among all students?

Table 3: Strategies that can be to support equitable access and effective use of Flipgrid among all students

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D.	Remark
1	Provision of training sessions to ensure all students are familiar with using Flipgrid effectively.	3.08	0.78	Agreed
2	Offering technical support to students facing challenges with accessing Flipgrid on their devices.	2.71	1.39	Agreed
3	Assurance of access to necessary devices and internet connectivity for all students to use Flipgrid.	2.95	1.75	Agreed
4	Integration of Flipgrid into the curriculum to accommodate diverse learning styles and needs.	2.91	1.55	Agreed
5	Encouragement of peer support and collaboration to assist students who may struggle with using Flipgrid.	2.99	1.03	Agreed
	Aggregate mean	**2.73**	**0.84**	

The respondents on Table 3 agreed that various strategies can support equitable access and effective use of Flipgrid among all students. Training sessions are recognized as essential for ensuring that all students are familiar with using Flipgrid effectively. Offering technical support to students facing challenges with accessing Flipgrid on their devices and ensuring access to necessary devices and internet connectivity are also important. Additionally, integrating Flipgrid into the curriculum to accommodate diverse learning styles and needs, as well as encouraging peer support and collaboration, are strategies that are supported by the respondents. These findings indicate a comprehensive approach to promoting the equitable and effective use of Flipgrid among students.

Research Question Four: What technical challenges do students face when using Flipgrid, and how can these be addressed?

Table 4: Technical challenges students face when using Flipgrid, and how can these be addressed

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D.	Remark
1	Difficulty in uploading videos can be addressed by providing clear, step-by-step tutorials.	3.54	0.74	Agreed
2	Slow or unreliable internet connection can be mitigated by offering offline options or lower bandwidth alternatives.	3.47	0.62	Agreed
3	Incompatibility with certain devices can be resolved by ensuring Flipgrid is optimized for various platforms and providing device-specific guidance.	3.44	0.82	Agreed
4	Lack of familiarity with Flipgrid features can be addressed through introductory workshops and hands-on practice sessions.	3.27	0.80	Agreed
5	Issues with video and audio quality can be improved by offering tips on recording techniques and recommending compatible equipment.	2.99	0.45	Agreed
	Aggregate mean	**2.94**	**0.93**	

The respondents on Table 4 agreed that students face several technical challenges when using Flipgrid, but these can be addressed through targeted solutions. Difficulty in uploading videos is a significant challenge, which can be mitigated by providing clear, step-by-step tutorials. Slow or unreliable internet connections can be managed by offering offline options or lower bandwidth alternatives. Ensuring Flipgrid's compatibility with various devices and providing device-specific guidance can address issues of incompatibility. Additionally, lack of familiarity with Flipgrid features can be improved through introductory workshops and hands-on practice sessions, while video and audio quality issues can be addressed by offering tips on recording techniques and recommending compatible equipment.

Discussions

The finding of the study indicated that students at the University of Ilorin are actively engaged with the Flipgrid platform, particularly in participating in discussions, collaborating on group projects, and improving their presentation skills. This level of engagement suggests that Flipgrid serves as an effective tool for fostering collaborative learning and enhancing students' understanding of course materials. This is in agreement with Johnson (2020), who posited that tools like Flipgrid encourage active participation and peer interaction and significantly contribute to students' learning experiences and help in building essential communication skills. Similarly, Smith (2018) found that platforms promoting collaborative efforts among students lead to a deeper understanding of content and improved academic performance. The findings also revealed that Flipgrid positively impacts undergraduates' academic performance and critical thinking skills. With students acknowledging its role in encouraging active participation and promoting reflective responses. This finding underscores the value of interactive platforms in enhancing students' analytical and evaluative abilities. This is line with Smith (2018), who submitted that engaging students in platforms like Flipgrid that require them to articulate and defend their ideas can significantly improve their critical thinking skills. In the same vein, Williams (2021) highlighted that active participation in digital discussions is correlated with better academic outcomes as it encourages students to process and analyze information more deeply.

Another finding hinged on the strategies identified to support equitable access and effective use of Flipgrid among all undergraduates highlight the importance of providing necessary resources and support. The respondents agreed that training sessions, technical support, and ensuring access to devices and internet connectivity are crucial for maximizing the platform's effectiveness. In agreement with this finding, Johnson (2020) noted that equitable access to digital tools is essential for minimizing the digital divide and ensuring that all students can benefit from technology-enhanced learning environments. Smith (2018) also pointed out that without adequate training and resources, students may struggle to effectively utilize digital platforms, leading to disparities in learning outcomes. Students at the University of Ilorin face some technical challenges when using Flipgrid, but these challenges can be mitigated with appropriate support and interventions. The most common issues include difficulty uploading videos, slow internet connections, and incompatibility with certain devices, all of which can hinder students' ability to fully engage with the platform. Marcus (2019) identified similar challenges in his study, noting that technical barriers are a significant obstacle to the effective use of digital platforms in education. Smith (2018) also emphasized the importance of providing clear guidance and support to help students overcome these challenges and make the most of the available

technology. Addressing these issues requires a proactive approach, including the provision of tutorials, device-specific guidance, and alternative options for students with limited internet access. Williams (2021) highlighted the need for institutions to invest in resources that ensure all students can participate fully in digital learning environments, regardless of their technical capabilities. By addressing these technical challenges, universities can enhance the overall effectiveness of Flipgrid and similar platforms, ensuring that all students can benefit from their use.

Conclusion

The respondents agreed that they are actively engaged with the Flipgrid platform, particularly in participating in discussions and collaborating on group projects. However, seeking feedback from instructors and peers on Flipgrid is less common, indicating potential for further engagement. Flipgrid is viewed as a beneficial tool for enhancing academic performance and developing critical thinking skills among students. While it positively influences students' ability to analyze perspectives, the platform's impact on articulating and defending ideas is moderate. The respondents agreed on the importance of various strategies to ensure equitable access and effective use of Flipgrid, such as training sessions and technical support. Integrating Flipgrid into the curriculum and promoting peer collaboration are also recognized as essential for accommodating diverse learning needs. Students face several technical challenges when using Flipgrid, but these can be addressed with targeted interventions like tutorials, device-specific guidance, and improved internet options. Workshops and tips on recording techniques are also recommended to enhance the user experience.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it was recommended that Universities should;

1. expand the availability and scope of training programs to ensure that all students are proficient in using Flipgrid and other digital platforms effectively.
2. provide comprehensive technical support, including device-specific guidance and tutorials, to help students overcome challenges related to uploading videos and using Flipgrid features.
3. work towards ensuring that all students have access to necessary devices and reliable internet connectivity to participate fully in digital learning activities.
4. encourage students to actively seek and utilize feedback on Flipgrid to enhance their academic performance and critical thinking skills.

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