STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF CLOUD-BASED ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE READINESS: A STUDY OF FINAL YEAR BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS

Ishola N.A & Orenusi O.

Technology and Vocational Education

Faculty of Education

University of Lagos

Abstract

This paper examined awareness, readiness and barriers to the adoption of cloud-based accounting software by final-year Business Education students at the University of Lagos. A descriptive survey kind of research was utilized wherein 67 students were sampled and a structured questionnaire was used that had three sections; awareness about ten cloud based platforms, factors that affect readiness and obstacles to adoption. Awareness was measured based on a binary scale (Aware or Not Aware), whereas readiness and challenges were measured based on a four-point scale. Analysis was done using percentages of awareness and mean standard deviation of readiness and challenges. The results showed low awareness and majority of the platforms were found to have low awareness of less than 35%. The moderately recommended readiness factors were institutional support, internet connectivity and peer influence whereas challenge such as fear of making mistakes, resistance to change and lack of training were strongly perceived. The curriculum integration, institutional support, training workshops, and lower-stakes practice environmental areas have been suggested as recommendations to improve digital competence and employability.

Keywords: Cloud Accounting, Technology Readiness, Students' Awareness, Business Education

Introduction

Connected to accounting, cloud computing has transformed the accounting practice to allow real-time collaboration, remote learning, and scalability of the systems to suit classroom experiences and professional practice (Ayinla et al., 2024; Keglevica Kozjaka et al., 2024). Cloud-based accounting systems, including QuickBooks Online, Xero, and Zoho Books, have become the in-curriculum components in higher education, where they are used to develop practical digital competence (Agrawal and Jethy, 2024; Ho, 2024). Nonetheless, the adoption in African settings such as Nigeria has not been uniform, and infrastructural and capacity constraints have remained constant (Ayinla et al., 2024; Sebele Mpofu, 2024). Such differences bring up the question of whether students are exposed to and comfortable using cloud tools prior to graduation (Lin and Jeyararaj, 2023; O'Callaghan et al., 2021). Awareness and readiness research may identify gaps in implementing education and administration.

The readiness to use technology is a convenient framework to assess the readiness of students to use cloud systems in accounting programs (Musyaffi et al., 2023; Lin and Jeyaraj, 2023).

Preparedness implies optimism and innovativeness as driving factors, and discomfort and insecurity as inhibition to the adoption of technology (Musyaffi et al., 2023; Ho, 2024). According to the studies in the accounting education field, the willingness to adopt new digital tools is mediated by perceived usefulness and ease of use (Ayinla et al., 2024; Ma and Ruannakarn, 2024). The readiness and usage behavior of students are further formed through institutional support, competence of lecturers, and access to training (Ho, 2024; Sebele Mpofu, 2024). In turn, preparation cannot be separated of the greater digital transformation agenda in higher education.

Empirical research indicates that cloud-based systems have the potential to improve performance, engagement, and collaboration through authentic practice settings that resemble the real-world working conditions (Ma and Ruannakarn, 2024; Musyaffi et al., 2022). However, the advantages can be weakened in resource-limited environments by such challenges as the lack of bandwidth or high software licensing fees (Sebele Mpofu, 2024; FinancesOnline, 2024). There is a difference in awareness of certain platforms, which may influence the adoption patterns and acquisition of skills (Agrawal and Jethy, 2024; EduCorpus, 2024). The knowledge of awareness patterns is used to frame the instruction and support services.

Final-year Business Education students of the University of Lagos will soon enter a labour market where the skills to use cloud-based accounting tools are becoming a more and more expected requirement (Ayinla et al., 2024; Lin and Jeyaraj, 2023). It is possible to measure their awareness levels, readiness drivers, and perceived barriers to inform curriculum changes and teaching methods based on the needs of the industry (Ho, 2024; Keglevic Kozjak et al., 2024). This type of evidence is capable of informing resource distribution on connectivity, equipment, and training to help optimise learning results (Sebele Mpofu, 2024; Ayinla et al., 2024). This research thus answers pressing questions regarding readiness towards accounting practice rich in technologies. The insights will help institutions to enhance digital competence and employability.

Statement of the Problem

The high pace of the adoption of cloud based accounting systems in the professional practice requires graduating students not only to be familiar with the most important platforms but also to be prepared to do so properly. Although curricular activities have been made to include the use of digital tools, the level of exposure of the final-year Business Education students to the use of particular cloud accounting software is not clear. In the absence of adequate awareness, the students will not be able to cope with practical assignments that are demanded by contemporary employers.

The willingness to use the cloud accounting tools relies on a set of variables such as previous experience in the digital realm, availability of training, the competency of lecturers, and the institutional system. In case of weak these enablers, students can become anxious, resistful, or inefficient to work with cloud systems. It is needed to understand the relative weight of these influences to make specific improvement in teaching and support services.

Other problems encountered by students include untrustworthy internet, limitations of the device, subscription fees, data protection issues, and technical problems. These obstacles may destroy confidence and inhibit a long-term adoption, despite existing awareness and initial interest. Empirical evidence that describes the awareness of students, determinants of being ready, and perceived obstacles is needed to inform the interventions that can be put in practice. This paper

attempts to present this evidence to end-year Business Education students at the University of Lagos.

Theoretical Framework

This paper will be based on Technology Readiness Index (TRI) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) a model which offers a picture on how people embrace new technologies. The TRI clarifies that the willingness to adopt technology is predetermined by the positive factors of optimism and innovativeness, and by the negative ones of discomfort and insecurity (Musyaffi et al., 2023). These constructs are useful in the context of Businees education (Accounting), as they assist in knowing the level of confidence and readiness among the students towards incorporating cloud-based systems into their learning process. This assessment of preparedness is crucial to aligning the academic preparation with the industry needs, especially where digital change is quickly transforming the practice of the profession (Lin and Jeyaraj, 2023).

The TAM supplements this point of view with the importance of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as the most significant predictors of technology adoption (Ayinla et al., 2024; Ma and Ruannakarn, 2024). In the case of Business Education students, the attitudes to cloud-based accounting tools are conditioned by such institutional variables as internet connectivity, competence of lecturers, and the possibility to use training opportunities (Ho, 2024; Sebele-Mpofu, 2024). A combination of TRI and TAM will introduce a thorough theoretical basis of analysis of awareness, readiness, and barriers, having an apparent chance to act as a solid framework of understanding the interaction of psychological and contextual factors that influence the adoption of technology in accounting education.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Determine the level of awareness of cloud-based accounting software among final-year Business Education students at the University of Lagos.
2. Identify the factors influencing students' readiness to adopt cloud-based accounting software.
3. Examine the challenges faced by students in adopting cloud-based accounting software.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of awareness of cloud-based accounting software among final-year Business Education students at the University of Lagos?
2. What factors influence students' readiness to adopt cloud-based accounting software?

3. What challenges do students face in adopting cloud-based accounting software?

Literature Review

Cloud-Based Accounting: The Platforms and Concepts.

Cloud-based accounting is the provision of accounting services through internet-based applications, allowing real-time access, consistency of versions, and multi-site working processes (Ayinla et al., 2024; Keglević Kozjak et al., 2024). Such platforms do not require on-premises installations, which provide business and educational institutions with flexibility and scalability. Such platforms as QuickBooks Online, Xero, Sage Business Cloud Accounting, Zoho Books, FreshBooks, Wave, NetSuite, KashFlow, Tally ERP (cloud-enabled versions), and Odoo Accounting are popular (Agrawal and Jethy, 2024; EduCorpus, 2024). These systems allow learners to experience real environments in practice and allow students to practice invoicing, reconciliation, reporting, and audit trails as they would in the real world of accounting (Ho, 2024; Ayinla et al., 2024). The introduction of cloud-based accounting solutions to the education sector is necessitated by the necessity of getting the academic training in line with the industry requirements. These platforms facilitate blended learning and distance access, which acquired a particular topicality in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic (Musyaffi et al., 2022; Ma and Ruannakarn, 2024). Developing cloud systems into the curriculum enables institutions to increase the digital competence and employability of students. Nonetheless, proper infrastructure, training of the faculty, and institutional policies leading to the integration of technology must be successfully implemented (Ho, 2024; Sebele-Mpofu, 2024).

Ready Technology in Accounting Education.

Technology readiness is the inclination to accept and utilize new technologies which is frequently assessed by optimism, innovativeness, uneasiness and insecurities (Musyaffi et al., 2023; Lin and Jeyaraj, 2023). In accounting studies, readiness and perceived usefulness and ease of use are connected to adoption and continued use (Musyaffi et al., 2022; Ayinla et al., 2024). High-level readers are likely to adjust easily to the cloud-based systems and those that have low-readiness may encounter anxiety and rejection. Such dynamics reiterate the role of evaluating preparedness prior to the introduction of technology-based curricula. Empirical evidence indicates that the level of readiness among accounting students is neither high nor low as motivational factors prevail over the inhibitory ones (Musyaffi et al., 2023; O'Callaghan et al., 2021). Nonetheless, there are differences in subgroups, which depend on previous experience with technology, gender, and institutional support. Latent interest can be translated into successful adoption with the help of targeted interventions including training workshops, faculty development programs, etc. (Ho, 2024; Sebele-Mpofu, 2024). Knowledge of these issues is essential in creating strategies that will increase preparedness as well as learning outcomes.

Digital Skills, Literacy, and Implications in Curriculum.

Efficient use of cloud-based accounting systems is based on digital literacy. It includes in its set of skills the ability to retrieve information, evaluate data, multimedia communication, and act ethically in the online environment (O'Callaghan et al., 2021; Ho, 2024). In response to these changes, employers are looking to hire graduates who are knowledgeable in analytics and automation and cloud platforms, which leads to restructuring accounting education (Lin and

Jeyaraj, 2023; Ho, 2024). Incorporating cloud accounting in the course of study offers a student with practical exposure, closing the gap between learning and practicing (Ma and Ruannakarn, 2024; Ayinla et al., 2024). Nonetheless, the integration of the curriculum should address pragmatic issues of inadequate infrastructure and disparities in digital competence of the students. The strategies that will be effective are scaffolding learning activities, integrating technology during the assessment, and offering constant support by use of tutorials and workshops (Musyaffi et al., 2022; Sebele-Mpofu, 2024). Such steps will remain sure that students not only get the technical skills but also gain the self-confidence to work with the cloud-based systems in their professional activities.

Difficulties: Finding infrastructure, Money, and Trust.

Although the advantages of cloud-based accounting systems are noteworthy, there are a number of challenges that prevent their use in the developing countries. Poor internet connectivity, expensive devices, subscription plans, and low institutional support continue to be a major issue (Sebele-Mpofu, 2024; FinancesOnline, 2024). These infrastructural constraints have the capacity to diminish access and utilization of cloud platforms by students hence affecting the learning outcomes. Moreover, the issue of data privacy and security is another factor that discourages students and institutions to adopt it (Lin and Jeyararaj, 2023; Ayinla et al., 2024). Issues that are related to confidence are also critical in terms of technology adoption. The willingness of students who would use cloud systems can be compromised by technical glitches, insufficient training time, and fear to make mistakes (Musyaffi et al., 2023; O'Callaghan et al., 2021). Such issues can be disproportionately represented by readiness and frequency of use in the context of resources constraints, which requires strategic investments in infrastructure and specific training programs (Ho, 2024; Sebele-Mpofu, 2024). These barriers are issues that need to be addressed to ensure cloud-based accounting systems are successfully integrated in a higher-education institution.

Methodology

In this research, the survey research design was descriptive in nature, and the aim was to explore the awareness and readiness issues and challenges of the adoption of cloud-based accounting software in the case of final-year Business Education students at the University of Lagos. It was deemed suitable to use the design as it will allow gathering the data of a large population in order to characterize their features and views. All final-year students of the department were the population and stratified random sampling was used to select 67 students so that they represented the various course possibilities.

The structured questionnaire was used to collect the data in three sections in accordance with the research questions. In section A, participants were asked about their knowledge of ten accounting platforms based on the cloud platform (Aware or Not Aware) through a binary scale (true/false) to determine their familiarity with each software. Section B considered factors that affect readiness and Section C looked at challenges to adoption; each of the sections used a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). The instrument was tested by two experts on Educational Technology and Accounting Education and a pilot test was run to fine-tune the items. Cronbachs alpha was used to determine reliability and this indicated that all sections had a Cronbachs alpha more than the acceptable value of 0.70.

Analysis of data entailed descriptive statistics to sum up on response. In the case of Research Question 1, percentages were calculated of awareness and non-awareness of each of the software. In Research Question 2 and 3, readiness factors and challenges mean and standard deviation were calculated. The findings were given in tables to make it easy to interpret and understand, which reveal the readiness of students towards cloud-based accounting systems and the challenges they face.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of cloud-based accounting software among final-year Business Education students at the University of Lagos?

Table 1: Awareness of Cloud-Based Accounting Software Among Final-Year Business Education Students

Software	Aware (n)	% Aware	Not Aware (n)	% Not Aware
QuickBooks Online	20	29.85%	47	70.15%
Xero	17	25.37%	50	74.63%
Sage Business Cloud	21	31.34%	46	68.66%
Zoho Books	18	26.87%	49	73.13%
FreshBooks	20	29.85%	47	70.15%
Wave	23	34.33%	44	65.67%
NetSuite ERP	16	23.88%	51	76.12%
KashFlow	20	29.85%	47	70.15%
Tally Cloud	21	31.34%	46	68.66%
Odoo Accounting	18	26.87%	49	73.13%

Comprehensively, the findings demonstrate that Business Education students in final years are not very aware of cloud-based accounting systems. Awareness was between 23.88% (NetSuite ERP) and 34.33% (Wave), and most of the tools had the range of 25 to 31, such as QuickBooks Online (29.85%), FreshBooks (29.85%), KashFlow (29.85%), Zoho Books (26.87%), and Odoo Accounting (26.87%). In direct relation, Not Aware scores were good and ranging between 65.67% (Wave) and 76.12% (NetSuite ERP). These trends imply that the exposure to certain cloud platforms, even to popular solutions such as QuickBooks and Xero, are still minimal, and indicate

the existence of a distinct gap between the level of awareness and practical introductory activities in the curriculum that is to be filled before graduation.

Research Question 2: What factors influence students' readiness to adopt cloud-based accounting software?

Table 2: Mean and SD of Factors Influencing Readiness to Adopt Cloud-Based Accounting Software

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD
1	My prior experience with digital tools influences my readiness to use cloud accounting software.	2.55	1.16
2	Institutional support (e.g., labs, licenses, policies) affects my ability to adopt cloud systems.	2.69	1.12
3	Reliable internet connectivity impacts my readiness to use cloud accounting platforms.	2.63	1.22
4	Training opportunities improve my confidence in using cloud tools.	2.58	1.04
5	Peer support encourages me to adopt cloud-based accounting systems.	2.63	1.17
6	Access to suitable devices (laptop/tablet) influences my readiness level.	2.51	1.15
7	Lecturer competence with cloud tools enhances my readiness.	2.37	1.18
8	Perceived usefulness of cloud systems motivates me to adopt them.	2.58	1.13
9	Ease of use influences my willingness to use cloud accounting tools.	2.52	1.10
10	Assessment and course requirements encourage adoption of cloud accounting systems.	2.57	1.10

The factors of readiness were moderately endorsed (Means 2.372.69), and the strongest effects were found in the items related to institutional support (M = 2.69, SD = 1.12), reliable internet connectivity (M = 2.63, SD = 1.22) and peer support (M = 2.63, SD = 1.17). The positive influence was also consistent in items associated with training opportunities (M = 2.58, SD = 1.04), perceived usefulness (M = 2.58, SD = 1.13) and assessment requirements (M = 2.57, SD = 1.10). The minimum mean was received in lecturer competence using cloud tools (M = 2.37, SD = 1.18), which could be a gap in instructor-led facilitation that could undermine the preparation of students. The standard deviations (1.04-1.22) indicate that there is a perceptible difference and variability in the experiences and perception of students, which means that the institution needs to provide uniform instability provisioning (labs, licenses, policies) and development of the faculty to enhance the preparedness of all cohorts.

Research Question 3: What challenges do students face in adopting cloud-based accounting software?

Table 3: Mean and SD of Challenges to Adopting Cloud-Based Accounting Software

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD
1	Poor internet connectivity limits my ability to use cloud-based accounting systems.	2.85	0.78
2	Lack of training makes it difficult to adopt cloud-based tools.	3.00	0.83
3	High cost of devices affects my readiness to use cloud accounting platforms.	2.99	0.82
4	Subscription fees/licensing costs for software are a barrier.	2.90	0.81
5	Limited institutional support hinders adoption of cloud accounting systems.	2.93	0.78
6	Concerns about data privacy and security discourage usage.	2.93	0.87
7	Technical issues and downtime reduce my confidence in cloud systems.	2.84	0.82
8	Lack of time for additional training affects my readiness.	2.90	0.81
9	Resistance to change among peers impacts adoption.	3.07	0.82
10	Fear of making mistakes discourages me from using cloud tools.	3.13	0.83

Students stated a strong level of difficulties, a number of them have a mean that is close to or over 3.00, which shows that they concur with these barriers. Fear of making mistakes (M = 3.13, SD = 0.83) and resistance to change among peers (M = 3.07, SD = 0.82) followed by lack of training (M = 3.00, SD = 0.83) were the most salient ones. Other barriers related to costs and access, such as high cost of devices (M = 2.99, SD = 0.82) and high cost of subscription/licensing (M = 2.90, SD = 0.81), and low internet connectivity (M = 2.85, SD = 0.78) were also significant. Other issues such as data privacy/security (M = 2.93, SD = 0.87) and technical issues/downtime (M = 2.84, SD = 0.82) only add to the adoption barriers. The comparatively small dispersion (SDs 0.78-0.87) indicates that there are common perceptions of these obstacles among the respondents and that structured training, low-stakes practice, enhanced connectivity, and subsidized access would make a significant difference in its alleviation and enhancing technology uptake.

Discussion

The results of the current study suggest that the concept of cloud-based accounting software among the Business Education students in their final years is not very widespread, with the majority of platforms showing less than 35 percent awareness of cloud software. It indicates that even though cloud technologies are becoming increasingly applicable in the accounting practice, students are not exposed to them in the course of their academic training to the maximum extent. The resulting levels of low awareness might be a barrier to their seamless operation at cloud-based workplaces, which justifies the establishment of cloud-based system integration into the curriculum. The fact that more than fifty percent of students are not familiar with popular programs such as QuickBooks and Xero is a major indication of an existing disparity between industry demands and higher education preparation.

Regarding readiness, institutional support, consistent internet access, and peer influence were moderately supported, with the least score given to lecturer competence, which represents the possible discrepancy in facilitation by instructors. Strong perception of challenges was felt with

fear of making mistakes, change resistance, and training being the greatest challenges. These results are in line with the past research reporting the importance of infrastructure and confidence-building in adopting technology. These obstacles may be overcome in a structured training, better connectivity, and less-stakes practice setting that may increase the preparedness of students and create a favorable attitude towards cloud-based accounting systems.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that the final-year Business Education students in the University of Lagos have the lowest awareness, and moderate readiness to use the cloud-based accounting software, and they are experiencing a great challenge regarding confidence, infrastructure, and training. These deficiencies highlight the necessity of specific interventions, such as curriculum integration, institutional support, and capacity-building programs, to get graduates sufficiently fit to face the accounting practices that are technologically relevant.

Recommendations

1. Bring cloud-based accounting software into Business Education course in the form of practical and hands-on modules.
2. Support institutions through enhancing internet accessibility and providing subsidies to cloud technology.
3. Conduct frequent trainings to both students and faculty to instill confidence and technical skills.
4. Create low-stakes practice settings so as to lessen fear of errors, and promote experimentation with cloud tools.

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