

1st Covenant University Training and Workshop on Education Technology (CUTWET)

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Charles Ayo making his presentation

The Centre for Systems and Information Services (CSIS) and Centre for Lifelong Learning (CLLL) has organized the 1st Covenant University Training and Workshop on Education Technology (CUTWET) with the theme “The Place of ICT in Building a Robust Education in Nigeria Using Wireless Technology, Google Apps For Education (GAPE), E-learning and Smart Classroom Technology”.

Professor Sanjay Misra, a lecturer in the Department of Computer and Information Sciences, Covenant University, who spoke on the topic “Harnessing the Power of Cloud Computing and Securities” described CLOUD (Computing Location independent Online Utility available on Demand) Computing as storing and accessing data and programmes over the internet, instead of the computer’s hard drive. Cloud computing is the consumption of computing resources without worrying about specifics.

According to Professor Misra, “As individuals, many people use simple cloud services on daily basis without even realizing it. Anyone that makes use of web-based services that provide email and storage is using the cloud. Though many people have concerns about its current uses, there is no doubt that it is changing the way systems and services are provided. The more informed IT departments are about the cloud, the better the position they will be in when making decisions about deploying, developing, and maintaining systems in the cloud.”

Speaking on how Google cloud platform works, Professor Misra explained that, “Google Cloud platform is a set of modular cloud based services that allows one to create anything from simple websites to complex applications. It also provides the building blocks so that one can quickly develop everything from simple websites to complex applications. Individuals have to explore how they can make cloud platform work for them.” He added that developers were building a wide range of applications on App Engine, including a scalable web and mobile applications, games, enterprise applications and more.

He identified University of Ilorin (Unilorin), University of Benin (UniBen) and some other tertiary institutions to have subscribed to Google Apps for Education. He added that Google Apps for Education was a suite of free productivity tools for classroom collaboration and it was free for schools with 24/7 support at no cost. Users would never have to worry about ads and would also be in control of their data. It could also be used on any device (e.g. PC, tablet or phone) while allowing the user to enjoy a consistent experience irrespective of the device.

“An educational institution that desires to adopt Software as a Service (SaaS) should note that the service model will not require more than a device that has an internet browser for access. Software as a Service (SaaS) packages from providers like Google come free of charge to individual users within an educational institution. It requires no software licenses or updates as this will be taken care of by the SaaS Provider”, he said.

Speaking on the opportunity of Software as a Service in the Nigerian education context, Professor Misra revealed that the University of Ilorin had pioneered a scheme where internet-based tablets were provided to all students. That, he said, served as a medium for receiving and storing lecture materials. According to him, Google had also embarked on initiatives to make more bandwidth available to institutions that subscribed to the Google Apps for Education software, among which were Universities of Ilorin and Benin.

Professor Misra pinpointed some factors posing challenges to cloud computing in the Nigerian education context such as privacy. He said that with cloud computing, an educational institution’s data were entrusted to be managed by companies on remote servers. The company managing customers’ information could accidentally or intentionally reveal it or utilize it for unauthorized purpose. Also, Privacy statements written by cloud providers were written in very complicated ways and were not understood by customers.

Another challenge was that of data availability- limited access to internet connection. The epileptic power supply in Nigeria made it a serious challenge, meanwhile, customers wanted to move around with their information by storing their data on larger memory chips and carry them around.

He also revealed that cloud application integrating platforms were not securely created. The infrastructure used to integrate with cloud were not also fully secured and that was because the knowledge of authentication and authorization of cloud programme had not been fully explored.

In proffering solutions to the challenges in cloud computing, Professor Misra noted that it could be assured by keeping Cloud private or having a tight Service Level Agreement (SLAs) to further enhance privacy as well as control accessibility. Also, the use of encrypted protocol wherever possible could serve as a solution.

“The decision to move to cloud-based services should fit into the institution’s overall objectives. Before any service is moved to the Cloud, the institution’s management should ensure such actions are consistent with their strategic plans”, he advised.

Another Lecturer, Dr. Adedayo Odukoya who spoke on the topic “Concept of Educational Technologies: Overview” defined Educational Technology as the tools and techniques devised to improve teaching and learning. They are innovative ways of designing, delivering, facilitating and managing instructions. Educational Technology spans the teaching, counseling, testing and certification domain.

According to him, one major problem that affected Nigerian universities was that after 4-5 years of higher education, graduates still found it hard to collect their certificates. That, he attributed to the level of technological knowledge in the education system.

“In the use of technology to facilitate learning and teaching, it is very imperative to ensure that it is ethical; it engages and motivates learners; it enhances collaboration; it inspires learning and creativity as well as improves human performance”, he advised. Examples of Educational Technologies include touchpad, PC, Notebook, Laptop.

Speaking on the evolution of technology, Dr Odukoya noted that technology started long ago from the caves, as discovered by the archeologists, and it had passed through different stages of development. Recent developments in Educational Technologies include: Wikipedia, Youtube, Cell phones, Smartphones, blogs, Skype, twitter, Powerpoint, Animations, Podcasts, and Videoscribes (visualization) among others.

The Director, Centre for Lifelong Learning and Chairman, Local Organizing Committee, Dr. Nicholas Omoregbe, in his welcome address, welcomed both the internal and external participants. He expressed expectation that the workshop promised to be enlightening and good topics had been chosen and would be handled by seasoned and capable lecturers.

He said, over the years, Covenant University had been adjudged to be the best ICT driven institution in Nigerian and still remained the best, adding that it had made the institution to further take up the initiative of how it could contribute the development of ICT Education in Africa.

He, however, implored the participants to take advantage of the lectures and make use of them anywhere they go. It would further take education in Africa to a higher level.

The training and workshop, which commenced on 13th, ends on 17th of July, 2015.

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