About Edafe

Edafe is an adult international student from Nigeria. He completed a full time Master's degree in Forensics and Cyber Security at the University of Greenwich, London, in January 2017.

Edafe's digital learning

- Edafe is an enthusiast for using social media to support learning.
  - WhatsApp is useful for chat and for taking screen shots of lab work
  - YouTube provides an accessible source of information to prepare for lectures and to supplement lectures, for clarification or extension of a topic
- Edafe feels that digital technology has made life easier for international students
  - Lecture capture enables students to review lectures frequently as they get used to 'British' English
  - Image-based sharing services such as WhatsApp allow students to understand an issue quickly
- Edafe's key message is that digital access allows learners to build a personal support system, that includes social media and YouTube.
Edafe's story

Edafe is an international student with a keen interest in digital technology. During his time in the UK he has expanded his use of technology for learning considerably, and he now speaks with animation about the tools that have helped him achieve success. His list includes university systems such as the Greenwich Moodle-based VLE and Panopto lecture capture. But his greatest enthusiasm is for sharing the study process with his peers through social media services such as Facebook and WhatsApp. Skype allows him to study with a friend who lives in another town.

But the technology that seems to have provided the most consistent value to Edafe is YouTube. "In lectures I take notes but I don't always remember what I've written. That's why I like YouTube. I look it up after the lecture and then I remember and understand." He reflects that this is because "If you read a book it's like memorisation, but watching video is like a conversation. It has had a big impact on my education…. It helps me get the concept. Many books don't get straight to the point like YouTube videos." It is helpful for Edafe, who lives an hour's bus ride from the campus, to be able to watch YouTube videos en route and make good use of his journey time. He explains that "I have a routine. If I'm on the bus, I watch YouTube videos instead of sleeping - YouTube [that is] related to my course."

Because he can choose a variety of different people explaining the same subject, Edafe finds he is more likely to understand a concept fully. All students can benefit from finding a presenter and presentational style that suits their learning, but for international students, YouTube and lecture capture have other benefits. The ability to replay a video or lecture several times, to pause and repeat key phrases, and to review regularly, is critical to students for whom English – or in Edafe’s case ‘British’ English – is not their first language. Edafe comments in his video that "British accents are different from English in other parts of the world." He said that it took him 3 months to understand what his lecturers were saying but that "If there was a video, I could go over and over it." And if lecturers give information that is not on the reading list, the lecture recording gives Edafe another chance to hear and follow it up.

Edafe says that he enjoys being taught and that the experience of being in a face-to-face lecture adds to his confidence in the information. He also appreciates being able to study in the university library, not only to make good use of his time on campus but because at home "there are a lot of distractions." While he enjoys a variety of study and reading areas, he also values the ability to access the library's resources from a distance. "The university has very effective … computer systems/technology. The library is good at providing different platforms and research materials [and] remote login as well." Edafe is particularly impressed to discover that there are digital ways of managing references and bringing them into essays and assignment.

Digital technology makes it simple to communicate and collaborate with other students. Edafe uses a Facebook group for his course, and WhatsApp and Skype more informally. With lecturers he is sometimes unwilling to reveal a lack of understanding, "but with friends and course colleagues I can ask people if I have a question. I use it a lot. [For example,] after not getting the right answer in a course [assignment], I checked with other people via WhatsApp and [we] shared screen shots of the right answers. Sharing screen shots of our lab work on WhatsApp is also good. We are using Facebook to share things about the course."
Edafe is worried that "sometimes we spend more time on social media than talking with people" and that with too much digital learning we may lose the structures and guidelines that come with being formally taught. But he knows that some digital technologies have been invaluable to international students like himself. Reflecting on his use of YouTube to extend his understanding and knowledge, Edafe summarised his experience like this: "Digital technology helps you learn beyond the book."

**Key issues**

- **Inclusion:** Having lecture recordings available to listen to in their own time helps students who may not be learning in their first language.
- **Making time:** Having access to educational resources while on the move means that learning can be fitted into busy lives.
- **Communication:** Digital tools mean you can quickly share notes, questions, images and ideas with other learners. In fact note-taking can blend with sharing and peer support.
- **Library love:** Access to authentic resources online, available anywhere with internet access, the expertise of the staff and the physical spaces of the library for learning are all important to learners.
- **Mixing formal and informal learning:** Students who may not have understood a concept in class can find a relevant video on YouTube, generate their own references, or find online resources that explain it differently.
- **Independence:** Digital access gives learners more independence, but sometimes structure and guidance are appreciated. Edafe is a capable independent learner who also enjoys being taught and knowing that he is 'on the right track'.
- **Sound institutional systems:** Most students rely on the VLE for access to resources and for the reassurance that 'everything they need' for learning is available from the one site. The VLE should be rich in resources, have reliable and up to date course information, offer a variety of channels for communication, and allow learners to catch up with and revise/review course content such as lectures.

**Edafe uses the following technology, apps and websites**

- **Moodle VLE:** for links to course resources and information.
- **Panopto lecture capture:** to review and understand lectures better; to review information when revising
- **Facebook:** for connecting with others on his course.
- **YouTube:** to find summary information in preparation for a lecture or tutorial, and for clarifying information afterwards.
- **WhatsApp:** for connecting with others on the course and for sharing image files, especially photos and screen shots related to practical work and assignments
- **Skype:** for connecting with other students to discuss and review subject information