



Enhancing Learner Support at the National Open University of Nigeria: A Critical Analysis of E-Ticketing Implementation

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Abstract

This study examined the enhancement of learner support at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) through the implementation of an e-ticketing system. The primary objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of the e-ticket platform in improving learner support services for NOUN students. Guided by five hypotheses, the study adopted a survey research design. Data were collected from 634 students and 7 staff members via an online questionnaire and information from the NOUN Information and Call Centre (NICC) and analysed using simple percentages. Findings revealed that the e-ticketing system significantly reduced the time required to resolve student complaints and improved overall satisfaction with support services. Additionally, the system led to a reduction in the number of unresolved issues, and a notable improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of addressing student concerns, compared to traditional in-person visits to study centres. The system was also found to be accessible and user-friendly for students. Based on these findings, the study recommends that NOUN management invest in robust server infrastructure and regular system maintenance. This would help minimise website downtime and loading delays, thereby further enhancing the timely resolution of student complaints and improving the overall effectiveness of the e-ticketing system.

Keywords: E-Ticketing Implementation, Learner Support, Students' Complaints and Issues, National Open University of Nigeria



Introduction

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is not a new mode of education delivery in Nigeria; it is considered one of the most important educational innovations in Nigeria and the centre of dynamic growth and transformation globally. Open and Distance Learning (ODL), according to UNESCO (1997), is the most remarkable development in the field of education and training in recent years. Hence, the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria (2002) defines ODL as any form of learning in which the provider enables individual learners to exercise choices over any one or more of several aspects of learning and distance learning as an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or in time from the learner. Also, UNISA (2008) regards ODL as a multi-dimensional concept aimed at bridging the time, geographical, economic, social, educational and communication distance between the students and the institution, the students and the academics, the students and courseware and the student and their peers. This made Jegede (2012) refer to open learning as the flexibility of and access to instruction by distance education method in order to ensure that broad availability of educational opportunities that will reach many segments of the population is possible. Also, Oba-Adenuga (2019) sees Open and Distance Learning as a type of education that focuses on removing barriers to access learning and gives opportunity to students to combine family and work responsibilities with education.

ODL has been a game changer, where access to higher education is concerned. Many Nigerian youths have long been denied their places in gaining admission into the university because the universities in the country could not provide space for the youth population. For instance, Jimoh (2024) reported that the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) said 77% of the 1,842,464 candidates whose 2024 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) results were released scored less than 200 out of 400. Data obtained from the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board on the 2023 Unified Tertiary disclosed that 452,443 UTME candidates applied for 78,578 medicine spaces in Nigeria in 2023 admission. Also, 239,018 candidates applied for social science courses whereas, there are only 97,744 vacancies;

similarly, 227,453 candidates applied for science-related courses with a total of 141,397 available slots; for engineering courses, 163,123 candidates applied and the vacancy of 68,896 in universities. Likewise, for admin-related courses, a total of 117,792 candidates applied, whereas there are only 38,725 vacancies. For Arts and humanities, JAMB revealed that a total of 85,264 candidates will battle for 52,221 slots. That is, the country's 264 existing universities simply do not have the capacity to accommodate the millions of students who apply each year.

Admissions crisis continues to be one of Nigeria's biggest challenges in higher education. National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), the only full Open and Distance Learning (ODL) educational institution in Nigeria, has the capacity to provide equal opportunity in higher and continuous education as an alternative to solve the problem of accessibility. Open and Distance Learning remains the primary mechanism for the information-driven age, a tool that has bridged the gap between developed and developing communities. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has offered access to many people who would have previously been denied access to educational opportunities based on where they live and work, poor-economic circumstances, social status, etc. UNESCO (2002) attested to this by stating that Open and Distance Learning is a form of education that is focused on opening access to education and training provision, freeing students from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of students.

The NOUN provides a wide range of programmes for learners. The benefit of the NOUN ODL programmes ranges from accessibility, flexibility, reduced costs of operations to students, networking opportunities in education, reduction of illiteracy and poverty levels, and the development of the nation. According to Oba-Adenuga (2019), getting access to university education in Nigeria is sometimes characterised by agony, pain, and corrupt practices, as admission seekers pay heavily for admission and sometimes are duped by agents. NOUN brings succour to the admission process as applicants do not need to lobby any agent before securing admission. Also, compared to the traditional classroom settings, which are characterised by attending

classes, listening, reading, writing, and doing other activities designed by the teacher/instructor in the face-to-face situation, ODL does not require students to be in the same location. In ODL, the learner determines what to learn, when to learn, how to learn, and who to collaborate with in learning. As a matter of fact, students in ODL may not have physical contact in person with other students or the facilitators till graduation. Students attend classes by visiting the class web pages; they complete Tutored Marked Assignments (TMA) according to the class schedule; they communicate with the facilitators and classmates using e-mail and online discussion/facilitator's forums.

Despite the potential benefits of NOUN's Open and Distance Learning (ODL) model, its student support services have historically been inadequate. As Sewart (1993) emphasises, effective learner support requires active participation from both the learner and the tutor/supporter. Learner support encompasses all non-instructional activities provided by an ODL institution to facilitate student learning. These activities range from administrative processes like catalogues, schedules, admissions, assessment, registration, and financial aid to academic support such as counselling, faculty office hours, tutoring, laboratories, and library resources. At the NOUN, students frequently encounter a wide array of problems, including project moderation issues, exam venue changes, name errors on certificates, date of birth corrections, faculty/departmental issues, SIWES issues, postgraduate problems, student portal and account issues, study centre changes, name corrections, incorrect passport uploads, NYSC concerns, admission and entry-level inquiries, e-learn portal login problems, undergraduate project/seminar/practicum/teaching practice uploads, programme changes, graduation-related issues, and missing or incomplete results. The traditional process of submitting physical letters at study centres to address these issues has proven ineffective, often leaving students frustrated due to unresolved problems.

To address the persistent challenges with student support services, the NOUN, under the leadership of the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Olufemi Peters, launched an e-ticketing platform on Tuesday, June 7, 2022, at the university's main campus in Jabi, Abuja. The NOUN Information and Call Centre (NICC) is responsible for managing the platform,

utilising dedicated staff and advanced digital equipment to ensure efficient delivery of service in line with ODL principles. As stated by Peters (2022), this e-ticketing system is a crucial learner support tool designed to address all student inquiries related to their academic experience. Kumar, Singh, and Sharma (2019) revealed that e-ticketing platforms provide students with a clear and transparent process for submitting and tracking tickets. Similarly, Alenezi, Alharbi, and Almujaally (2019) stated that e-ticketing platforms enable support staff to track and manage tickets, ensuring that issues are resolved in a timely and efficient manner. Alenezi also found that e-ticketing platforms have been shown to improve students' satisfaction and reduce the time taken to resolve their issues.

The e-ticketing system offers a significant improvement over the traditional, time-consuming methods for addressing NOUN student concerns. Students can now submit inquiries or complaints electronically through support@nou.edu.ng, thereby eliminating the need to visit study centres or the main campus in person. This streamlined process ensures prompt resolution of student issues. The platform is also designed to be easily accessible, user-friendly, cost-effective, and flexible. The platform also fosters better communication between students and the university, keeps students informed of the progress of their requests through real-time updates, and provides a hassle-free method for resolving complaints. Additionally, students can conveniently access their statements of results through the platform.

It is pertinent to mention the main categories of the NOUN e-ticketing platform: student account category handles complaints related to finance. The academic registry category addresses issues like enquiries on certificate collection, change of Study Centres, etc. Students' industrial work experience is a category that handles enquiries on internship among other sub-categories. Faculty/Departments category handles graduation matters, change of programme, entry level, among others. Other categories include Directorate of Information and Technology (DICT), student portal issues, postgraduate, result-related issues, and eLearn portal, with their respective sub-categories. The launch of the e-ticketing platform was supposed to address these

difficulties being experienced by the learners during their studies. It is against this background that this study examined the effectiveness of the e-ticketing platform for National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) students.

Statement of the Problem

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), despite its focus on technology-driven education, faces significant challenges in providing adequate learner support services to its growing student population. These challenges manifest in a wide range of unresolved student issues, including missing results, certificate collection inquiries, Study Centre changes, portal errors (e.g., name corrections, incorrect passport uploads), NYSC-related problems, admission and entry-level inquiries, postgraduate issues, student account discrepancies, and financial complaints. The traditional method of students physically visiting Study Centres to lodge complaints has proven inefficient, often resulting in wastage of paperwork, lengthy resolution time, unresolved issues, students' frustration, wasted time, and even students' dropout. While NOUN has implemented various solutions, these problems persist. To address these persistent issues, NOUN introduced an e-ticketing platform as a key learner support system, aiming to improve service delivery and student satisfaction. However, the effectiveness of the use of the efficient platform in resolving the students' complaints has not been evaluated. This study, therefore, critically examined the implementation, utilisation, efficiency and effectiveness of the e-ticketing system as a means of enhancing learner support at NOUN.

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were raised to guide the study:

H0₁: The implementation of the e-ticketing system will not significantly reduce the time taken to resolve student complaints and issues at the NOUN.

H0₂: The e-ticketing system will not lead to a significant improvement in student satisfaction with the learner support services provided by the NOUN.

H0₃: The e-ticketing system will not reduce the number of unresolved student issues and complaints, thereby decreasing student frustration and dropout rates at the NOUN.

H0₄: There will be no significance difference in efficiency and effectiveness in addressing student issues and complaints when compared to the traditional method of physically visiting Study Centres.

H0₅: The e-ticketing system will not be easily accessible and user-friendly for the NOUN students, thereby increasing its adoption and utilisation rate.

Methodology

The research design for this study was a survey research design. The target population for this study comprised all students and staff of the National Open University of Nigeria, both at the main campus and the Study Centres, who have engaged with the e-ticketing platform.

The sample for this study comprised six hundred and thirty-four (634) students and seven (7) members of staff in NOUN. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select the samples through an online Google form. The samples comprised students and staff who used the e-ticket platform to raise or resolve issues. In all, three hundred and nineteen (319) females and three hundred and fifteen (315) males, making six hundred and thirty-four (634) students and seven (7) members of staff comprises three (3) females and four (4) males were excluded from the study.

The research instruments used for the study were self-designed questionnaires titled “E-ticketing Users Inventory (EUI)”, one for staff and another for students, respectively. The questionnaires were divided into two sections, A and B. Section A comprised the demographic data of the respondents such as gender, age, marital status, job cadre, etc. while section B was made up of items from the hypotheses structured in a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The scoring of the items

was as follows: SA = Strongly Agree (4), A Agree (3), D = Disagree (2), SD = Strongly Disagree (1).

The face and content validity were ascertained, and the test-retest was used to check the reliability, and the result was 0.68 coefficient.

The instrument was administered via an online Google form to the students at the Study Centres and NOUN staff, both at the main Campus, Abuja. Desk officers at the Study Centres, telegram and WhatsApp social platforms were used as a medium of communication to the students and staff to respond to the questionnaire. The data collected via an online Google form and the NOUN Information and Call Centre (NICC) were analysed using simple percentages.

Results

Tables 1, 2 and 3 show the number of Tickets raised per month from June to December 2022, the number of tickets raised per month in 2023 and 2024, as provided by NICC, respectively. While the Summary results of respondents (Students) and Staff presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 1: Number of Tickets raised per month from June to December, 2022, as provided by (NICC)

Month	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
Number of Tickets raised	6,103	10,153	9,637	9,073	3,812	1806	5,446	46033
Total Tickets closed	6,090	10,129	9,622	9,057	3,807	1,805	5,440	45,950

Source: The Authors

Table 2: Number of Tickets raised per month in 2023 as provided by (NICC)

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Tickets Raised	9,097	7,607	8,979	4,507	1,592	1,853	8,686	9,777	8,436	4,697	2,166	1,447	68,844
Tickets Closed	9,087	7,605	8,977	4,507	1,592	1,855	8,682	9,774	8,429	4,690	2,115	1,445	64,251

Source: The Authors

Table 3: Number of Tickets raised per month in 2024 as provided by (NICC)

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Number of Tickets raised	13,799	11,157	9,742	42,535	8,852	16,842	7,849	22,407	14,308	13,640	11,888	3,576	173,595
Total Tickets closed	13,736	11,038	9,084	41,919	8,493	13,328	7,368	19,360	12,263	11,696	10,130	3,065	161,444

Source: The Authors

Table 4: Summary of results of respondents (students) in percentages (%) generated through Google Form

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Average Course
	General Usage and Accessibility					
1	I use the e-ticketing system all the time.	230 (36.3%)	143(22.6%)	147(23.2%)	114(18%)	2.23%
2	E-ticket system is easy to access.	187(29.5%)	118(18.6%)	175(27.6%)	154(24.3%)	2.47%
3	Technical difficulties are common while using the e-ticket system.	187(29.5%)	113(17.8%)	174(27.4%)	160(25.2%)	2.49
4	I know about the e-ticketing system before using it.	207(32.6%)	121(19.1%)	145(22.9%)	161(25.4%)	2.41
	Efficiency and Responsiveness					
1	My issue was quickly resolved through the e-ticketing system.	242(38.2%)	141(22.2%)	132(20.8%)	119(18.8%)	2.20
2	I usually receive timely updates on the progress of my requests.	238(37.5%)	138(21.8%)	140(22.1%)	118(18.6%)	2.22
3	I am satisfied with the speed of response through the e-ticketing system compared to previous methods.	248(38.8%)	133(21%)	146(23%)	109(17.2%)	2.19
	Satisfaction and Impact					
1	I am satisfied with the e-ticketing system.	209(33%)	147(23.2%)	151(23.8%)	127(20%)	2.31
2	E-ticketing system improved my overall experience as a NOUN student.	203(32%)	134(21.1%)	176(27.8%)	121(19.1%)	2.34
3	I will recommend the e-ticketing system to other students.	183(28.9%)	129(20.3%)	168(26.5%)	154(24.3%)	2.47
	Technical and Infrastructure Issues					

1	Website crashes and slow loading times are not common while using the e-ticketing system.	196(30.9%)	172(27.1%)	131(20.7%)	135(21.3%)	2.32
2	There is reliable internet access to use the e-ticketing system.	173(27.3%)	158(24.9%)	165(26%)	138(21.8%)	2.42
3	The compatibility of the e-ticketing platform with my device is highly compatible.	155(24.4%)	126(19.9%)	187(29.5%)	166(26.2%)	2.57

Source: The Authors

Table 5: Summary results of respondents (Staff) in percentages (%) generated through Google Form

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Average Course
1	It is good to use the e-ticketing system to manage students' requests all the time.	28.6%	00%	14.3%	57.1%	
2	It is easy to navigate and use the e-ticketing system interface.	28.2%	00%	28.6%	42.9%	
3	I received adequate training on using the e-ticketing system.	14.3%	28.6%	14.3%	42.9%	
4	The system provides you with the necessary tools to effectively manage and resolve student issues.	14.3%	28.6%	00%	57.1%	
5	I believe the e-ticketing system has improved student satisfaction with learner support services.	28.6%	00%	00%	42.7%	
6	Technical issues with the e-ticketing system have hindered its effectiveness.	28.6%	57.1%	14.3%	57.1%	

7	The system is compatible with various network types (e.g. Wi-fi, cellular data).	14.3%	14.3%	14.3%	57.1%	
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Source: The Authors

Hypothesis 1 states that the implementation of the e-ticketing system will not significantly reduce the time taken to resolve student complaints and issues at the NOUN. The results of the study rejected the hypothesis. The implementation of the e-ticketing system will significantly reduce the time taken to resolve student complaints and issues. The respondents confirmed that they are satisfied with the speed of response through the e-ticketing system compared to previous methods. The results of the study confirmed that out of 634 responses from “I am satisfied with the speed of response through the e-ticketing system compared to previous methods”; 230 respondents strongly agreed with the statement, while only 114 respondents strongly disagreed. This indicated the effectiveness of the e-ticketing platform to resolve students’ complaints and issues on time.

Hypothesis 2 states that the e-ticketing system will not lead to a significant improvement in student satisfaction with the learner support services provided by the NOUN. The results of the study rejected the hypothesis. We therefore uphold the alternate hypothesis that states the e-ticketing system will lead to a significant improvement in student satisfaction with the learner support services provided by the NOUN. The responses from the respondents in the study indicated that 203 respondents, who represented 32% of the population in a 4-Likert scale strongly agreed and 121 respondents represented 19.1% strongly disagreed that e-ticketing system improved their overall experience as a NOUN student. Also, the respondents claimed that they will recommend the platform to other students.

Hypothesis 3 states that the e-ticketing system will not reduce the number of unresolved student issues and complaints, thereby decreasing student frustration and dropout rates at NOUN. The results of the study rejected this hypothesis as respondents strongly agreed that the e-ticketing system would reduce the number of unresolved student

issues and complaints. Also, 32% of the respondents strongly agreed that the e-ticketing system improved their overall experience as a NOUN student, while just 19.1% strongly disagreed with this. In addition, 28.9% of the respondents strongly agreed to recommend the e-ticketing system to other students.

Hypothesis 4 states that there will be no significant difference in efficiency and effectiveness in addressing student issues and complaints when compared to the traditional method of physically visiting Study Centres. The results of the study rejected this hypothesis. We, therefore, uphold the alternate hypothesis that states that there will be a significant difference in efficiency and effectiveness in addressing student issues and complaints when compared to the traditional method of physically visiting Study Centres. However, the majority of the students' respondents (26.2%) complained that their devices were not compatible with the e-ticketing platform. Similarly, most of the staff respondents strongly agreed that technical issues with the e-ticketing system have hindered the effectiveness of e-ticketing, as 57.1% agreed with this, while no respondent strongly disagreed. Likewise, 29.5% students' respondents, which consisted the majority, strongly agreed that technical difficulties are common while using the e-ticket system.

Hypothesis 5 states that the e-ticketing system will not be easily accessible and user-friendly for NOUN students, thereby increasing its adoption and utilisation rate. The result of the study was at variance with this hypothesis. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. Responses from the samples of the study indicated that the e-ticket system is easy to access and user-friendly. Some respondents claimed that the compatibility of the e-ticketing platform with their devices is highly compatible. Also, data generated from NOUN Information and Call Centre (NICC) (2025) on the use of the e-ticketing system as of December 2022 just six months of its inception was 45,950. This indicated that the platform was well patronised by the students. However, majority of the staff respondents (42.9%) strongly disagreed with the item "It is easy to navigate and use the e-ticketing system interface".

Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings of this study, the discussion can be structured across the four thematic areas assessed: General Usage and Accessibility, Efficiency and Responsiveness, Satisfaction and Impact, and Technical and Infrastructure Issues.

The analysis of the responses from both students and staff reveals a divergent experience with the e-ticketing system implemented at the institution. While students generally reported moderate satisfaction and usability, staff responses reflected frustration and systemic inadequacies, indicating a disconnect between front-end experience and back-end functionality. These findings are consistent with existing literature and digital adoption models in higher education.

1. System Usage and Accessibility

Student responses suggest that the e-ticketing platform is being widely used, with 58.9% (SA + A) indicating regular usage. However, ease of access remains a challenge, as 51.9% of students either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the system was easy to access. Technical difficulties were reported by over half of the student respondents.

These challenges are mirrored in staff responses, where 71.5% expressed difficulty navigating the system, and 57.1% disagreed that the system provided adequate tools for issue resolution. These findings align with Al-Emran & Shaalan (2018), who emphasised that digital platforms in higher education often encounter accessibility and technical barriers, especially when training and system design do not match user needs.

Furthermore, Osakwe (2019) identified infrastructural constraints as a major challenge to ICT implementation in Nigerian universities, which helps explain the shared concerns over internet reliability and platform-device compatibility.

2. Technical Support, Training, and Infrastructure

One of the key discrepancies emerged in staff feedback regarding training and technical support. The majority of staff (57.1%) strongly

disagreed that they received adequate training, while 42.9% indicated that technical issues hinder the system's effectiveness. In contrast, students did not comment directly on training but did report issues such as platform crashes and device incompatibility.

These findings reinforce Pereira & Barbosa (2020), who highlighted that while e-ticketing systems may improve service delivery, their success heavily depends on the capacity of staff to manage them, which in turn is influenced by training and system familiarity.

Davis's (1989) Technology Acceptance Model also provides a useful lens: students may perceive the system as useful (leading to adoption), but staff rejection stems from low perceived ease of use due to poor interface design and inadequate training.

3. Efficiency, Responsiveness, and Satisfaction

Students generally perceived the e-ticketing system as efficient. Approximately 60% of students agreed that their issues were resolved promptly and that they received timely updates. However, fewer students (49.2%) were unwilling to recommend the system, indicating only conditional satisfaction. This result agreed with Alenezi, Alharbi, and Almujaally, (2019), who found that e-ticketing platforms ensured that issues are resolved in a timely and efficient manner.

Staff, on the other hand, were less positive. Although a minority (28.6%) acknowledged potential benefits, the majority viewed the system as ineffective and cumbersome. These contrasting views may result from automated updates or surface-level responsiveness that create a perception of efficiency for students while masking the manual workload and technical delays encountered by staff.

This perception gap echoes Nguyen (2015), who found that student satisfaction with digital platforms often outpaces that of staff, especially where workflow management tools are not user-friendly on the administrative side. It also supports Ali & Ahmad (2016), who argued that strategic implementation, proper training, and system alignment can significantly improve both staff and student experiences.

4. Technical Compatibility and Infrastructure

Both student and staff responses highlighted persistent technical and infrastructural issues. Only 44.3% of students agreed that the system was highly compatible with their devices, and 47.3% expressed concerns over reliable internet access. Similarly, 57.1% of staff strongly disagreed that the system is compatible with various network types.

These concerns align with Osakwe's (2019) findings on infrastructural weaknesses in Nigerian higher education and reinforce Van Dijk & Hacker's (2003) argument that digital divide factors such as device availability, bandwidth, and digital literacy impact the success of ICT tools, especially in under-resourced environments.

Conclusion

E-ticketing system has been found to represent a crucial advancement in NOUN's commitment to providing efficient and effective learner support. The outcome of this study revealed the strong patronage of students on the platform and the confidence that students have in the platform to resolve their issues. By leveraging technology, the University has successfully bridged geographical and logistical barriers, aligning with the core principles of Open and Distance Learning. To ensure continued success, the NOUN should prioritise ongoing improvements in technical infrastructure, user accessibility, and staff and students' training. Future research could explore the long-term impact of the e-ticketing system and investigate strategies for optimising its performance to meet the evolving needs of the NOUN's diverse student population, as sustainable improvement requires an inclusive, system-wide strategy supported by both administrative commitment and digital competence development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to enhance the effectiveness of the e-ticketing platform and improve learner support services at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN):

1. The NOUN management should invest in robust server infrastructure and regular maintenance to minimise website crashes and slow loading times as this will reduce the time taken to resolve student complaints and issues.
2. The NOUN should ensure that students receive regular and timely updates on the progress of their tickets. This will foster transparency and reduce anxiety. This will improve students' satisfaction with the learner support services provided by the NOUN.
3. The NOUN management should ensure the e-ticketing platform is compatible with a wide range of devices and operating systems, including mobile devices, to enhance accessibility.
4. The NOUN management should provide necessary tools for staff and offline resources or partnering with internet service providers to improve connectivity of e-ticketing platform and to train both the staff and students on it.
5. The NOUN should implement an online support channel to provide real-time assistance to students encountering technical difficulties or needing guidance on using the platform for easy accessibility and user-friendly for the NOUN students.
6. Regular feedback loops should be developed between staff and students to inform system upgrades.

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