

UTILIZING E-LEARNING IN ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN ENCOURAGING QUALITATIVE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Everybody wants to improve on his previous knowledge and update his information record. The introduction of e-learning through information and communication technology (ICT) as a composite innovative knowledge dissemination technique seems to be the messiah that has come as an indispensable and inevitable technological device of learning capable of enhancing knowledge, widening ones scope or horizon of information and serving as a powerful tool for acquisition of skills. Hence, e-learning through ICT has come to meet and manage the attendant information explosion and the thirst for knowledge in the area of adult and non-formal education. It is in the light of this understanding that this paper discussed the concept of adult and non-formal education, e-learning, impact of e-learning in adult and non-formal education. The paper then concluded that e-learning offers innumerable benefits in enriching the quality and quantity of teaching process in adult and non-formal education. In Nigeria, teachers, students, lecturers and instructors in our formal and non-formal school system must be inducted to develop the needed skill and interest towards the use of e-learning for the purpose of teaching and learning. Based on this conclusion, the paper recommended that e-learning should be integrated in our school curriculum through ICT for rapid knowledge exposition.

The National Policy on information technology (IT) Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004)

envisaged the integration of ICT at every level of educational institution in order to play a leading role in the actualization of the goals of education as enshrined in the National Policy in Education which includes the contribution to national development through high level manpower training, development of the individuals' intellectual capabilities so as to understand their immediate and local environment, provision of opportunities for the acquisition of physical and intellectual skills necessary for individuals to be self reliant and be useful member of the society among others.

In the light of the above, as Nigeria embraces technology, the development of a technologically skilled work force becomes a major concern and the continuous development of human capital a vital source of economic value. These make education and training lifelong endeavors' for all citizens and e-learning offers opportunities for individuals especially those adults who dropped out of school due to one reason or the other and want to continue their schooling as the condition improves and those who learn under non-formal school setting, to obtain education through a process that is flexible in terms of where, when and how it takes place.

E-learning has the capacity of exposing learners to more diverse learning resources while at the same time connecting them to learners in other parts of the world. It provides life-long learning opportunities by making formal learning available at home, workplace and in the community. Because of the fact that e-learning is

flexible in terms of where, when and how learning occurs, it increases opportunities to learn and assist students and teachers acquire relevant skills for survival in the workplace and the society. Hence, the need to utilize e-learning in adult and non-formal education to encourage qualitative education. Even though e-learning through ICT has offered a lot of benefits in the area of adult and non-formal education, still it is confronted with some problems such as shortage of trained ICT personnel's, inadequate computer system, incessant power outage, lack of fund for maintenance to mention but a few.

Concept of Adult Education

Anyanwu (2005) explained adult education to mean the following:

- i. Adulthood as the attainment of a certain age of 18 or 21 years as prescribed by law.
- ii. Achieving a certain level of physical and mental maturity.
- iii. Adulthood as initiation into certain local puberty rites, age grade and ability to recall event that must have happened in some remote past.
- iv. Adulthood as ability to fend for oneself, one's dependents and of undertaking social responsibilities.

In spite of the above mentioned definition, it is generally accepted that adult education is seen as a process whereby skills, knowledge and attitudes are acquired and exchanged on a voluntary and often part-time basis, by persons with full-time occupation and in which their values, experiences and problems are not merely taken into consideration in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of all learning activities. Ehiemetor and Oduaran (1991) defined basic adult Education as literacy or other forms of education given to adults to make them employable and able to perform their social

roles satisfactorily. But owing to the emergence of ICT, there is need to introduce electronic learning as this will facilitate the teaching of adult and non-formal education.

Non-formal Education

This is a method of acquiring knowledge in which the teacher and learner meet face-to-face only occasionally and in which the greater part of teaching is done through printed materials or the electronic media (radio, television, telephone and computer). This type of learning takes place outside the four walls of a classroom. (Alele, Willian, 1990).

E-learning

E-learning refers to learning that takes place through electronic media such as Radio, Television, Telephone, and computer in order to facilitate learning (Lopez, 2003). In this modern age, computer offers these services now known as e-learning.

Computers are useful in teaching the basic skill. Computer aided instruction (CAI) helps learners to learn at their own pace through the drill practices, tutorial and also the use of computer special Adapter for the deaf. Here, education materials that combine sounds, voice, graphics etc. aid in teaching. Word processing is used to prepare worksheets, spread sheets to assist in the management of student grade. So the use of ICT in Education is on the increase. Thus there is e-learning in the classroom and even outside the classroom. Students now learn more on the internet. Courses from far away institutions are now taken on-line. Therefore, this technological innovation has made it possible to reach large number of adult learners as well as non-formal learners with ease. This process has encouraged qualitative education in Nigeria. (Colwell, 2007).

Benefits of e-learning in Adult and Non-formal Education

E-learning have had significant benefits in adult and non-formal education system. It has provided innovation opportunities for teaching and learning, it has equally engendered advances in research about how people learn thereby bringing re-thinking in the structure of education (Lopez, 2003). It is widely acknowledged that e-learning through ICT can be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning in adult and non-formal education. The prevalence and rapid development of e-learning has transformed human society and adult and non-formal learners from the information technology age to the knowledge age (Galbreath, 2006).

Infact, e-learning is becoming a natural part of man's daily life, thus it's use in adult and non-formal education by students is becoming a necessity. Certainly, the present and future, academic global community will utilize e-learning in the area of adult and non-formal education. Therefore the fundamental set of skills and knowledge that will be acquired by adult and non-formal learners as a result of utilizing e-learning include, cognitive proficiency, technical proficiency and ICT proficiency (the International ICT Literacy Panel, 2007).

- v. **Cognitive proficiency:** These are the desired foundational skills of everyday life at schools, at home and at workplaces, such as problem solving and visual/spatial literacy.
- vi. **Technical proficiency:** This refers to the basic components of digital literacy. It includes a foundational knowledge of hardware, installation and maintenance, software application, trouble-shooting, networking and elements of digital technology.

- vii. **ICT proficiency:** This refers to the integration and application of cognitive and technical skills. ICT proficiencies are seen as enabler to e-learning and allow individual or adult or non-formal learners to maximize the capabilities of technology.

At the apex, the use of e-learning result in innovation, individual transformation and society change.

Requirements in Utilizing E-learning in Adult and Non-formal Education

Over the years, studies are beginning to address the requirements for individuals to function successfully in a global village, and the assessment criteria necessary to evaluate if individuals have adequate competences to function successfully in this information age. ICT literacy forms the basis for design and conduct of assessment as well as diagnostic test of an individual life skills associated with information.

In teaching-learning process, Moursund and Bielefldt (1999) identified three major ways of using ICT for teaching and learning. These are information technology (IT) assisted learning, technology as a tool and computer and information science. Information technology (IT) assisted learning was divided into:-

- viii. Computer-assisted learning, which is the interaction between a students and a computer system, designed to help the students learn (drill and practice), tutorials, simulations and virtual realities.
- ix. Computer-assisted research, which implies the use of ICT as an aid to doing library and empirical research. This is enhanced through the growth of world wide web which has created virtual library that can only be accessed by the ICT literate.
- x. Distance learning, which is the use of telecommunications, designed to

facilitate students learning through e-mail, interactive web sites and two-way audio/visual teleconferencing.

In spite of e-learning recognized values, its integration in teaching and learning process will be dependent on teacher's knowledge, competence and willingness to integrate ICT in their teaching. The research findings have indicated that the integration of e-learning in teaching is generally positive, leading to a radical shift from the traditional teacher centered approach to a more student-centered approach (Cradler & Bridgforth, 2003, Lopez 2003, Kirschner & Woperies, 2008). Based on this therefore, there is need to optimize e-learning opportunities for encouraging qualitative education.

In addition to be above points raised, e-learning offers teachers and administrators the opportunities to evaluate student's performance as well as provision of instant feedback to the students. Moreover, the use of e-learning in teaching/learning in adult and non-formal education will enable the students to share ICT resources, communicate with one another through e-mail, mailing lists, newsgroup, and chat rooms. Scholars can post research, assignments, books or journals list, and reference materials on-line. Moreover, e-learning through ICT facilitates complex mathematical and statistical analysis of data, which are important aspect of research.

Conclusion

Utilizing e-learning in adult and non-formal education offers innumerable benefits in enriching the quality and quantity of teaching process in our schools. Despite the prevalent nature of e-learning through ICT in virtually every aspect of human learning, the mastery of literacy skills required to effectively function in a knowledge-based economy has not been widely attained due to some constraints, such as

high cost of ICT acquisition, erratic power supply, inability to integrate ICT in our school curriculum especially at the primary and post primary level of education.

In Nigeria, teachers, students and lecturers in our school system whether formal or non-formal must be inducted to develop the needed skills in the use of ICT to enhance e-learning especially in teacher education. This process will lead to the development of positive attitude towards the use of e-learning for academic exercise. Hence, the need to optimize e-learning in order to encourage qualitative education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In order to utilize e-learning in adult and non-formal education so as to encourage qualitative education, the following recommendations should be considered.

- xi. Our school curriculum particularly that of adult and non-formal education should be integrated with information technology.
- xii. The ministry of Education and major stakeholders in education industry should assist in the provision of instructional materials needed for teaching and learning by e-learners.
- xiii. Teachers, instructors and lecturers should be made to undergo training and retraining programmes in areas of new and emerging ICT to enable them integrate it in their teaching-learning process.
- xiv. Parents should be encouraged to install computers in their homes and connect them to the internet to enable their children and wards to practice the drills of ICT taught in schools to enhance e-learning especially in adult and non-formal education.
- xv. Effort should be made by the ministry of education to provide laptops as a gift to

- adult and non-formal education students. This could be done through students respective state government.
- xvi. Power holding company of Nigeria (PHCN) should improve on their regular power supply to enable adult and non-formal educator power their computer system during instruction.

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