INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) RESOURCE UTILIZATION IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF MASS COMMUNICATION IN NIGERIAN POLYTECHNICS

By

Erere Joy Anho
Department of Mass Communication,
School of Business Studies,
Delta State Polytechnic,
Ogwashi-Uku.

Abstract

The current trend by all countries – developed and developing – in restructuring their education and training systems to meet their development requirements clearly reveals that educational attainment is recognized as one of the fundamental indicators of development of a nation. In Nigerian polytechnics, this restructuring has integrated information and communication technology which has become one of the building blocks of modern society. This synergy is referred to as blended learning. With blended learning, the Nigerian polytechnic system is expected to produce a new breed of competent workforce, who can compete and excel in a rapidly changing environment and improve the country's economy. Under this situation, the polytechnic teacher has the challenge of learning through ICTs and also learning how to teach through them. ICTs play vital roles in facilitating the process of teaching and learning; by making the process to be interactive and collaborative thereby transforming the old traditional way of teacher – talking and students – listening approach. The primary purpose of this study therefore, is to examine how ICT resources could be utilized in the teaching and learning of Mass Communication in Nigerian polytechnics.

Globally, educational institutions are under pressure to use the new information and communication technology resources to teach students the knowledge and skills they need in the 21st century. The 1998 UNESCO World Education Report, tagged: "Teachers and Teaching in a Changing World," describes the radical implications the new information and communication technologies have for conventional teaching and learning. It predicts the transformation of the teaching – learning process and the way teachers and learners gain access to knowledge and information thus;

> *New possibilities are emerging which already show a powerful impact on meeting basic learning needs and it is*

> *clear that the educational potential of these new possibilities has barely been tapped. These new possibilities exist largely as the result of two converging forces, both recent by-products of the general development process. First the quantity of information available in the world – much of it relevant to survival and basic well-being – is exponentially greater than that available only a few years ago, and the rate of its growth is accelerating. A synergistic effect occurs when important information is coupled with the second modern advance – the new capacity to communicate among the people of the world. The opportunity exists to harness this force and use it positively, consciously and with design in order to contribute to meeting defined learning needs (UNESCO World Education Report, 1998, p. 19).*

Voogt (2003) presented the following as the functions of ICT in education:

1) ICT as an object. This refers to learning about ICT and it is mostly organized in a specific course. Here, what is being learned depends on the type of education and the level of the students.
2) ICT as an assisting tool. Typically, ICT is used independently as an assisting tool while conducting research.
3) ICT as a medium for teaching and learning. Here ICT functions as a medium through which teachers can teach and learners can learn. It appears in many different forms.
4) ICT as a tool for organization and management in schools.

In Nigeria, polytechnics are essentially established to produce middle level technical manpower needed for industrial and technical development of the country. The blending of traditional method of classroom face-to-face learning with new information and communication technology resources will enable the nation's polytechnics to produce highly skilled manpower, who will be the main drivers of the economy just as it is with most self-sustaining countries of the world.

By implication, Mass Communication as a course being regulated by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), a principal organ of the Federal Ministry of Education created to handle all aspects of Technical and Vocational Education falling outside university education, is designed to produce suitable middle level manpower for the various mass media establishments such as public and private newspapers, radio and television stations, public relations and advertising firms as well as other organizations needing the services of mass media practitioners.

On completion of the course, graduates are usually interested in careers in journalism, broadcasting, digital communication or media management and sales. Specifically, they are expected to among other things;

- ❖ Practice as news reporters for newspapers, magazine, radio, television and other media establishments.
- ❖ Act as sub-editors capable of planning pages of newspapers and magazines.
- ❖ Perform the duties of public relations and advertising officers.
- ❖ Act as Information Officers in government Information Departments.
- ❖ Become proof-readers for book publishing houses and newspaper/ magazine establishments.
- ❖ Produce programmes for radio and television.
- ❖ Take suitable pictures, develop and print them for use in media houses.

With modernity, the mode of performing the above tasks has changed tremendously. As such, Mass Communication students, who are trained through traditional face-to-face learning method without involving ICT resources will not only be ineffective; but will also not fit in properly into today's world. These are sufficient reasons for ICT resources to win global recognition and attention in the teaching and learning of Mass Communication as a field of study.

This paper is therefore aimed at examining the key ICT resources needed to facilitate the teaching and learning of Mass Communication in Nigerian polytechnics with a view to transforming "teacher - talking and student – listening" traditional approach to interactive, explorative and collaborative learning that will produce a technologically driven workforce with the essence and attributes of self- realization, self- reliance, self- employment and national consciousness.

Operational Definition of Terms

Blended Learning: It is a mixed mode approach to learning that offers a set of complex tools for content creation, self and collaborative learning in line with the known traditional method of classroom face-to-face learning (Idogho & Jimah, 2011).

Information and Communication Technology Resources: These are simply communication gadgets, hardware/software, equipment or facilities that have modernized, improved and eased the exchange of ideas and information of various kinds for the purpose of learning.

ICT resources that enhance teaching and learning of Mass Communication

There is no gainsaying the fact that ICT has the potential of enhancing scholarship and enquiries in the field of Mass Communication. In order to effectively meet these expectations, mass communication teachers must recognize and be willing to utilize the necessary ICT resources needed for instructional delivery. According to Jones (2003) effective learning is dependent on the will and competencies of the teacher in instructional delivery of lessons. On the part of the teacher, capacity building is a prerequisite for effective instructional delivery of lessons in today's world. This section

therefore attempts to discuss ICT resources that enhance teaching and learning of mass communication. They include:

1) **Computer**: The computer is no longer just a mathematical tool but an essential resource for teaching and learning. Today, the concept of multimedia, which refers to computer controlled devices that combine sound, images and text, has brought real life situations into the classroom. The British Council's ICT in schools project (2006) notes that the arrival of the multimedia computer in the early 1990s was a major breakthrough as it enabled text, images, sound and video to be combined in one device. This is clearly demonstrated in radio/ television studios or editing laboratory etc. in Nigerian polytechnics where mass communication is being taught. For example, mass communication students are taught how to prepare templates for newspapers and magazines on the computer using particular software such as Corel draw, Adobe page maker etc. Subsequently, they are made to input stories and pictures on the template. In the past, students were taught to plan newspaper pages on dummy sheets.

   Again, the computer has made it easy for broadcast lecturers to impact production and editing skills on their students. Computer assisted editing is now finding greater acceptance in broadcasting just as computers are being used to generate logs and schedule programme elements. Anho (2013:59) observes that the computer offers faster, cheaper, more efficient and effective means of achieving quality in broadcasting. It is believed that without this type of practical knowledge, students will not be able to perform these tasks after graduation. This is particularly true considering the fact that even small broadcast stations now use computer in most of their operations. It is important to note however that although the software used at each broadcast station may vary, once a student has learned one system, it won't be difficult to pick up the nuances of another operating system.

   By and large, multimedia computers are helping mass communication teachers to make their lessons more practical oriented and authentic while on the other hand they are helping the learners to internalize what is being taught quickly.

2) **Internet:** The internet has proven to be one of the most valuable vehicles for accelerated information flow between the teacher and the learner. Ogbomo (2004) describes the internet as a network of computers that communicate with each other, often over telephone lines. The potential of the internet lies in the provision of global platform for information sharing among organizations and individuals.

   Although the internet has been blamed for information overload, mass communication teachers have used it to enhance the teaching and learning process by spending much time to control students from sites that are unrelated

to the learning content. By implication, teachers can make their students to lookup and download any information needed on the internet with the use of search devices and services. In addition, students can access e-library materials through the internet.

3) **Electronic Mail (E-Mail):** This is the most widely used resource of the internet. It is used for sending and receiving mails through electronic devices. E-mail can be used by a teacher to reach many students at a distance once the students provide their valid e-mail addresses. The teacher can use e-mail to send learning materials to students; give assignment; assess and post students' scores. With the e-mail, students can now interact with their teachers and colleagues at a distance. That way, learning is no longer restricted to the classroom environment. Again, "there is transformation from traditional teacher-centered approach, which makes learners passive receivers to students- centered or democratic approach which makes learners active discoverers and explorers" (Sharndama, 2013:38).

4) **World Wide Web (WWW):** The World Wide Web (WWW) is an internet resource that provides a lot of opportunities for teaching and learning of mass communication. The website can be used for different purposes. For instance, dictating prepared or developed learning materials in a normal class setting may be difficult as it will waste a lot of time. However, with the web, the teacher can post the material on his website for the students to download for use in the class. Furthermore, the web provides working materials for the teacher. There are abundant learning materials posted on the web by experienced scholars. Teachers who are lacking working materials can browse and download them. The web can also be used to post assignments for the students. This will help to eliminate every form of confusion that may arise from misunderstanding of questions in a face- to –face learning situation.

5) **Global System of Mobile Communication (GSM):** The introduction of the global system of mobile communication has enhanced communication between mass communication teachers and their students. With the GSM, large classes can be grouped and a teacher may engage each group in conference calls or group chart to discuss assigned topics. Group members can also be accessed through the GSM irrespective of the distance and time of the day.

Barriers to effective utilization of ICT resources in the teaching and learning of Mass Communication

A number of factors can act as barriers to the effective utilization of ICT resources in the teaching and learning of Mass Communication within the polytechnic

environment. Mikre (2011) categorized these limitations as teacher related, student related and technology related.

For teachers, attitude plays an important role in the teaching and learning process. Many teachers may have positive attitude toward ICT resource utilization in the teaching-learning process, but many refrain from using them due to low self-efficacy; a tendency to consider one not qualified to teach with technology. Teachers' resistance and lack of enthusiasms to use ICT resources may also be a limiting factor. Although very many teachers are aware of the opportunities that ICT resources provide in the teaching-learning process, some are still resistant to change. Furthermore, many teachers may not have the required IT skills, nor do they have the needed training to use ICT resources in their teaching. On the other hand, some teachers who may be willing and enthusiastic may not have access to the needed ICT resources. Often times accessing the internet may be difficult due to problematic network.

On the part of students, there is the tendency for them to misuse the technology for leisure time activities and have less time to learn. Yusef and Dahani (2008) cited in Mikre (2011) describe online gaming, use of face book, chat rooms, and other communication channels as perceived drawbacks of ICT utilization in education, because students easily switch to these sites at the expense of their studies. Furthermore, utilizing ICT resources for learning may be difficult for weaker students because they may have problems with working independently and may need more support from their teachers or course mates.

Finally, the high cost of the technology and maintenance of the facilities, high cost of spare parts, virus attack of software and computer, interruption of internet connections and poor electrical power supply are among the technology related barriers inhibiting ICT resource utilization in the teaching and learning of Mass Communication.

Conclusion

This study examined ICT resource utilization in facilitating the teaching and learning of mass communication in Nigerian polytechnics. The paper x-rayed various ICT resources that are employed by mass communication teachers in teaching the different aspects of the course; such as broadcasting, newspaper and magazine production etc. It was noted however that aside some limiting factors that inhibit the effective utilization of ICT resources in the teaching and learning process, the resources can greatly enhance lesson delivery, learning activities as well as evaluation.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the above, the following recommendations have been suggested as a means of addressing the problems.

1) Education policy makers, educators and all concerned should properly evaluate and recognize the role of ICT in education generally so as to work for the effective functioning of ICT resources in the polytechnic system.
2) Government should provide ICT-enhanced learning environment to facilitate active, collaborative, creative, integrative and evaluative learning as an advantage over the traditional method. This will involve providing internet services, ICT hardware and software, and alternative power supply sources in all polytechnics across the country.
3) Training and retraining of mass communication teachers is also highly recommended. This will enable the teacher to be abreast with the ever changing technological world. It is hoped that when they are well trained, their self confidence will be boosted and it will in turn affect their attitude.

References

Anho, E. J. (2013) Application of information and communication technologies in traditional radio broadcasting: gain or pain. *ASUP-DSPG Multi-Disciplinary Journal.* 1(2), 57 - 63.

Jones, C. (2003) Differentiate Teaching and Providing for special Educational Needs. In S. Kunewell, J. Parkinson & H. Tanner (Eds). Learning to Teach ICT in Secondary Schools. London, Routledge Falmer.

Mikre, F (2011). The Role of Information Communication Technologies in Education: Review Article with Emphasis on the computer and internet. *Ethiop J. Educ & Sc.* 6 (2)

Ogbomo, M. O. (2004). Web page design. In E. C. Madu (Ed). Technology for Information Management and Service: Modem libraries and information centres in developing countries. Ibadan: Evi-Coleman.

UNESCO (1998). World Education Report: Teachers and Teaching in a Changing World. UNESCO

Voogt, J (2003). Consequences of ICT for aims, contents, processes, and environments of learning. In Akker J. et al (Eds) *Curriculum Landscapes and Trends*. Dordrecht; Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Yousef, A. B. & Dahamini, M. (2008). The economics of e-learning: the impact of ICT on student performance in higher education: direct effects, indirect effects and organizational change. In Mikre, F (2011). The Role of Information Communication Technologies in Education: Review Article with Emphasis on the computer and internet. *Ethiop J. Educ & Sc.* 6 (2)