

REVAMPING EDUCATION FOR MEETING THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF E-LEARNING IN NIGERIA

Theresa Obum Okoli

*Provost,
Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuozu,
Anambra State.*

Introduction

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have now been globally accepted as a way of carrying out major activities (teaching and learning) inclusive.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) emphasized the need for the integration of ICT in the Nigerian Education System. Consequent upon this, the Federal Ministry of Education mapped out the following objectives of ICT in Education

- (i) to facilitate the teaching and learning process;
- (ii) promote problem solving, critical thinking and innovative skills;
- (iii) promote lifelong learning ;
- (iv) enhance the various teaching/learning strategies required to meet the needs of the population;
- (v) foster research and development;
- (vi) support effective and efficient education administration;
- (vii) enhance universal access to information; and
- (viii) widen access to education and the range of instructional options and opportunities for anywhere, anytime, any-pace and any path learning (FME 2010:14).

In order to achieve these objectives government resolved that it shall:

- (a) build and encourage the development and sustenance of the ICT manpower required to achieve an ICT furthered education;
- (b) establish and sustain a common ICT infrastructure platform for education and encourage the development of a national education;
- (c) ensure and encourage ICT Research and development;
- (d) engage and encourage regular stakeholders consultations, sensitization of the learning community, public awareness and intergovernmental relations to achieve a broad based consensus on ICT in education;
- (e) provide appropriate legal, regulatory and security framework to ensure that ICT in Education and the conduct of related activities are focused on achieving ICT furthered Education;

- (f) adapt creative financing models for ICT in education.

Currently in Nigeria, there is a great demand for ICT driven education. The Federal Ministry of Education in conjunction with Supervising Bodies like National University Commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) has taken a positive step towards meeting the computer demand in education for example Computer Education courses are now made compulsory for students in tertiary institutions throughout the country. According to Galbreath (2006), the introduction of ICT in education has the potential for enhancing the tools and environment for learning.

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

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. Courses from far away institutions are now taken online. Therefore this technological innovation has made it possible to reach large number of students at a time. The prevalent and rapid development of e-learning has transferred human society from the informative technology age to knowledge age.

Problems of E-learning in Nigeria

Inspite of e-learning recognized values, its integration in teaching and learning process will be dependent on teachers knowledge, competence and willingness to integrate ICT in their teaching. Also a lot of problems are facing its implementation in Nigeria. Majority of the students and teachers are computer illiterates and cannot apply ICT facilities. Most of the teachers are unwilling to integrate e-learning in their teaching area. Most of the teachers and students do not have access to ICT facilities for the e-learning such as phone, computers etc. The epileptic power supply noticed in Nigeria also affect the use of electricity. Many places especially rural areas are not connected with the internet. It is very difficult for students located in such areas to have access with internet. There is inadequate low quality and non availability of ICT infrastructure for teaching e-learning (Alumode, 2013).

Fund is also a major impediment to integration of e-learning.

Inspite of the global awareness of the indispensability of ICT tools in education, most teachers and students still lack the basic knowledge of utilizing them.

There is generally lack of review and updating of existing ICT curricular especially at the tertiary levels to meet the challenging social needs as well as low capacity of curriculum developers and implementers.

Schools lack personnel/manpower for maintaining ICT facilities and when any of ICT facilities are damaged, these facilities will be dumped in the store.

Way Forward for Revamping Education for Meeting the needs and Challenges of E-learning in Nigeria.

- The potentials of ICT in the implementation of Nigerian educational reforms are only possible through adequate planning and proper integration. Aniebonam (2007) offered some major interventions which he believed would assist in integrating e-learning in driving educational reforms in Nigeria. These are provision of infrastructure (cyber centres, classrooms, buildings, offices etc.), Institutional network (LAN, WAN, wifi) systems and applications (internet, education portals etc), capacity building, digital library, technical support in institution, computer ownership scheme (for students, teaching and non-teaching staff).
- Adequate Funding: Adequate fund should be allocated to e-learning in schools. Tertiary institutions and schools that want to embark on e-learning should seek for financial assistance from non-governmental organizations and also from within their school.
- There is the need to increase the power supply for the country through the Power Holding Company of Nigeria. Government should provide alternative sources of power like solar to complement the power supply.
- There is a compelling need for training and retraining of teachers in the effective use of e-learning.
- Curriculum in Nigeria schools should be modified to integrate the use of ICT. The curriculum planners will need to keep abreast with the technological changes in education and hence ensure that new frontiers of knowledge are exposed and brought into the curriculum.
- Nigerian government both at local, state and federal levels should equip schools with adequate computer and internet connections.
- There is the need for sustained investment and commitment to Research and Development in ICT which can be achieved through:
 - (a) Providing adequate fund and encouraging Research and Development initiative to reveal new as well as improve existing ICT engendered pedagogies.
 - (b) Supporting, promoting and encouraging ICT research and development.
- The Federal Ministry of Education should provide and continually review standards and guidelines for ICT in education in line with national goals and global trends.

- Full implementation of ICT. It is not just enough to include ICT in curriculum, concerted efforts should be made to see that it is fully operational.
- ICT should be taken as a compulsory course in all teacher training institutions since it improves the quality of classroom teaching.

Recommendations

The following were recommended:

- ❖ Government at all levels should provide adequate fund for ICT in education.
- ❖ Policy makers should also look at the ubiquity of different types of ICT in the country in general and in the educational system at all levels.
- ❖ Teachers should be trained and retrained in the use of e-learning. Such training is necessary to improve and update their learning skills.
- ❖ Adequate structures and technologies should be provided to achieve the goal of Education.
- ❖ Government in collaboration with educational institutions should promote the development of locally appropriate ICT based educational material and software.
- ❖ The Federal Government should set aside certain percentage of the national budget for the promotion of e-learning at all levels of the educational system.

Conclusion

E-learning has been found to have several advantages in the field of Education. The goal of e-learning has not been fully attained in Nigeria due to some constraints. If these goals are to be achieved, our educational system need to be looked into. If these ideas generated by this paper are put into practice, then the needs and challenges of e-learning in Nigeria will be met.

References

- Alumode, B.E. (2013). Integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into Nigerian Educational System. *Journal of Qualitative Education* 9(2), 1 – 8
- Aniebonam, M.C. (2007). Using Technology to Drive Educational Reform in Nigeria. Retrieved 23rd of November, 2007 from <http://www.buyusa.gov/nigeria/en/134pdf>
- Bitcher, N. (2003). *Technological Infrastructure and Use of Information and Communication Technology in Education*. Paris: ADEA Publishers.
- Federal Ministry of Education (2010) *National Policy on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Education*. Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education*, Abuja: NERDC Press.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *National Policy on Education*, Lagos: NERDC Press.

Gallbreath, J. (2006). *Knowledge Management Technology in Education. An overview of Educational Technology*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Lopez, V. (2003). An Exploration of the use of Information Technologies in the College Classroom. Retrieved March 8, 2003 from <http://www.collegequarterly.co/2003>.

Osei, T.A. (2007). Survey of Information and Communication Technology and Education in Africa. Retrieved from www.infodev.org

Tull, B.A.M. (2001). About Learning On-line. Retrieved July 29 from <http://online.cc.ca.us/english/btull>