

E-LEARNING AS A STRATEGY FOR ENHANCING ACCESS TO MUSIC EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

To follow up the trends in globalization and technology, this paper further discusses the recent development, trends, issues and challenges of music education and e-learning in the 21st century Nigeria. This paper, proposes an ecology of ICT in music education as an outside in-inside out relationship, where cultural practices involving e-learning can be brought into schools, enhanced at school, and fed back into the digital world at large.

Keywords: e-learning, music education, ICT, e-content

E-learning was first called “Internet-Based training” then “Web training”. E-learning is defined variously as the type of education where the medium of instruction is computer technology or delivery of learning, training or educational programs by electronic by electronic means (Wikipedia). In another definition, e-learning according to Craige (2007), is the computer and network enabled transfer of skills and knowledge for the diffusion of innovative teaching. E-learning according to Roseenberg (2000), is the process by which people acquire skills or knowledge for the purpose of enhancing their performance through the internet or intranet and multimedia which leads to reinforced learning by means of video, audio, quizzes and other forms of interaction.

The global changes taking place technologically has presented the educational system with promising opportunities. In the opinion of Anene (2014), education has shifted from the traditional form towards new methods of teaching and learning through the explosion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Ricketts (2007), refers to e-learning as borderless education that crosses the boundaries of both time and space; this development has given rise to a redefined setting for teaching and learning, thus changing the future principles, practices, policies and the underlying issues related to knowledge acquisition that define the value, worth, meaning and delivery of educational services.

A closer look at the world today gives a picture of a global village due to the changes associated with globalization and Information Technology. The World Declaration on Higher Education (WDHE) for the 21st century in its preamble notes which states that there is an increased demand for, and greater diversification in higher education. In developing countries, access to education is limited, with less than 5% of students in tertiary education, compared to the world average of 16% (Prakash 2003, as reported in Gunga and Ricketts 2007). According to the same author, demand, especially in Africa, exceeds the ability to deliver; hence a significant portion of the population is locked out of education. A considerable proportion of this category goes to India, Europe and the United States of America in search of education. Through e-Learning, quality education, provided by knowledgeable personnel, becomes accessible to many, and the costs of higher education are also reduced in the process. In this regard, e-Learning comes across as more beneficial than the traditional set-up.

Again, it must be noted that globalization is not limited to the financial markets alone but it encompasses the whole range of social, political and economic sphere. Information Communication Technology (ICT) revolution is the central and driving force for a better society and the dynamic changes in all aspect of human existence especially in education. The global information technology has been described as the “world largest machine” and it is very complex. As Annan (1999) posited; the internet holds the greatest promise humanity has known for long-distance learning and universal access to quality education”. In agreement to this statement, Akinboye (2008) said that “it is a highly dynamic process of storing, transmitting and presenting information”. This means that the system has helped to create a more coherent global structure among international communities.

Additionally, adoption of e-Learning results in the reduction of environmental impact, through less travel and paper usage in preparation of teaching resources and assignments. It is important to note the fact that emphasis is now increasingly placed on the process rather than the content of education. This paradigm shift has been occasioned by an explosion of knowledge and rapid innovations in technology. In this regard, e-Learning is central to the educational sector. In education, the rise of virtual and corporate universities that offer competition to conventional tertiary institutions provides opportunity for what Mason (2003) as reported in Gunga and Ricketts (2007) calls borderless education that crosses the boundaries of both time and space. Such an educational environment has given rise to a redefined setting for learning and teaching, thus changing the future principles, practices, policies and the underlying issues related to knowledge acquisition that define the value, worth, meaning and delivery of educational services.

E-learning in the Context of Music Education

Music education can mean different things to people and because of this, it defies general accepted definition, yet its relevance to human endeavor cannot be over-emphasised. The role of music is important in the life of every man. This implies that much benefits are derived from it. This agrees with the views of Hoffer (1985) which regards "Music education as part of subject that has the power to awaken in us sensations and emotions of a spiritual kinds", He equally considers music education not only as an art but sees it as a force which affects the lives of the people who acquire it.

According to Nwaneri (2000), Music education in general is that education which trains an individual not only in the acquisition of general musical knowledge but also equips the individual with physical skills which enables that individual to survive, live a meaningful life and contribute to the growth of his/ her society and nation at large. Many have come to realize that musical experiences are too important to be ignored especially in educational development and advancement. As a result of this, the current trends on educational reforms in Nigeria should take cognisance of ensuring that what is provided to music education must fall in line with the expected goals of a qualitative educational policy that will see students of music achieving their potentials in life after school.

Music education involves training and pedagogy in music. It has to do with both theory and practice of music and how these two interact to better music as a discipline. The theoretical aspect of music pedagogy comprises of a smaller portion of the discipline, the successful interaction between the two (theory & practice) is important to the knowledge or understanding of music, result in the better performance of art of music. Digolo (2011) agrees that both theoretical and practical facets are important and complementary to music education; that music department of all levels of education worldwide are generally considerable small for a number of reasons. First, much of vocal and instrumental tuition is skill-based, geared towards developing proficiency in performance. Since student acquire playing or singing skills at different pace, there is need for personal attention in teaching. Secondly, the idea of giftedness or talent as being important to the decision to study music tend to give some 'exclusivity' to the discipline, thereby, locking out many potential learners. Additionally, the more pragmatic reason regarding the expenses involved in equipping music rooms and in some instances, the requirement that students purchase their own instruments, further reduces potential customers.

Within Nigeria, access to music education is limited with a considerable number of students interested in furthering their education locked out of the system. Most institutions offering music programs have often found it difficult to extend their courses outside the walls of their respective campuses due to the impracticability of transporting available resources for use outside of campus. However, it is increasingly evident that there is a need for extension of music training to the many interested people who do not have opportunities to study the discipline at university level. Distance and open learning both come to mind as solution to this challenge. The above situation compels service providers to explore possibilities of conducting music instruction through the internet as a way of reaching more people.

E-lessons are generally designed to guide students through information or help them perform in specific tasks. Two distinct types of e-content have been identified, namely information-based and performance-based content. The former communicates information to the student, while the latter involves the building of a procedural skill in which the student is expected to increase proficiency. Both types of content are applicable to music education. The theory of music is information-based,

and includes such aspects as history of music, ethnomusicology, the psychology and sociology of music, among many others. The application of e-Learning to information-based content would greatly enhance instruction in this area and provide a forum for students to interact widely with their peers and lecturers.

The practical aspect of music forms the core aspect of the discipline since music is essentially a performing art. The application of e-Learning to this aspect of music is hence very important yet is also the more challenging of the two types of content. It is for this reason that; music education has as yet not been included in the list of disciplines catered for in the Open Learning program. This paper goes into considerable detail to explore the application of e-Learning in disseminating performance-based information in music education.

Development in internet and multimedia technologies are the two key enablers of e-Learning. According to Rosenberg (2000), successful e-Learning depends on building a strategy that optimizes the technology within an organizational culture that is ready and willing to use it. Various technologies which are constantly improving, have been developed to facilitate e-Learning.

The increasingly popular trend in e-Learning, particularly in higher education is the creation of Virtual Learning Environment (VLEs), sometimes in combination with a Management Information System (MIS) to create a Managed Learning Environment in which all aspects of a course are handled through a consistent user interface standard throughout the institution. Virtual education refers to instruction in a learning environment where teacher and student are separated by time or space, or both, and the teacher provides course content through course management applications, the internet, multimedia resources and video conferencing among other technologies. A virtual classroom is therefore a learning environment created in the virtual space. It improves access to advanced educational experiences by allowing teachers and learners to participate in remote learning communities using personal computers. The quality and effectiveness of education is the process which is improved through the support of a collaborative learning process. The authors demonstrate the possibilities of expanding access to music education by the use of pre-recorded lessons in practical, which can be imported to remote areas for use by learners.

Challenges

According to the Digital 21 strategy report (2014), the world competitive yearbook conducted by the International Institute for Management Development ranked Nigeria 156th in technological infrastructure in 2018. Nigeria internet connection speeds and broadband and mobile penetration rates, at 1.86mb; a sharp decline from 3.15mb recorded in 2017. These data revealed that Nigeria does not have a good ICT infrastructure to support ICT in education. However, being able to use technology effectively requires an understanding not only of technology itself but also of effective pedagogical approaches for utilizing it in a particular content area. While many opportunities for expansion exist, the adaption of e-learning courses creates certain challenges that may have remarkable impact on it processes. With regard to implementation of e-learning courses in music education, the following are some of the challenges that have been noted:

1. Reluctant to move from fixed traditional approaches used over the years. Resistance to change cause people to shy away from e-learning.
2. Lack of proper or constant internet connectivity and the speed of the internet brought about by inadequate facilities and slow dial up speed respectively, also pose a challenge to proper implementation.
3. Time is an essential factor in developing e-content. In contrast to traditional lesson preparation, the amount of time required to develop and implement e-content may at times, be prohibitive to its utilization.
4. Technological shyness. The need for requisite technical skills among instructors or lecturers is necessary for the realization of effective result following the dissemination of e-content. Staff working with students online must be able to understand the content as well as be at least, reasonably or highly trained in the use of computer and internet.
5. Experience in the use of computers, computer ownership and efficient time management also determine the rate of adaption and implementation of e-learning approaches.

The Way Forward

- ❖ Online education is rapidly increasing. It is fast becoming a universal educational trend that must be adopted by all institutions of higher learning, especially department of music in all institutions.
- ❖ There should be need to create virtual learning environment to cater for distance and open-learning services in all music department.
- ❖ The music curriculum has to be reviewed to embrace these new trends in the information communication technology (ICT)

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