

EMERGING TRENDS IN EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY: THE RELEVANCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING IN NIGERIA

Dr. Dennis D. Duru

Abstract

The trends and issues in educational technology are dynamic and changes with time. The current trends in educational technology have become the means of instructional delivery online the world over in the recent times. This paper therefore discussed the concept of trends. It examined the current trends in educational technology and their relevance in teaching and learning with emphasis on the internet, e-learning, e-tutoring, outsourcing education and virtual library. On this basis, conclusion and recommendations were made.

The Concept of Trends

Trends are rarely specific reports on the truth, and an indicator of direction in a field, a programme, event or a phenomenon. Trends do not necessarily predict the future; rather they report current issues or status of things that develop over time. The Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2001) defined trend as a line of general direction or movement and a prevailing tendency or inclination. Trend is also seen as a general movement in the course of time of statistically observed or detected change over a period of time (Ely, 2002). Trends do not just emerge from year to year but usually begin with indicators from the past and generally strengthen or fade in subsequent years. It could occur as a result of innovations in a system, changes or as a result of technological development. New trends appear from time to time and usually reflect on ongoing analysis of direction.

Trends are considered as snapshots taken at a point in time and reflect current status of things. Isolated facts and opinions are not enough to establish a trend but opinions from knowledge authorities. Trends are therefore based on qualitative information. It could strengthen or weaken and new trends could emerge.

In the field of educational technology, trends help us to see the direction we are heading to as it shows new ideas, facts, approaches, devices introduced and their application to better the education industry.

The Overview

Issues and trends in educational technology are not static. They are dynamic and changes with time. The rate of development in educational technology continues to increase as new devices and equipment emerge and new applications employed. The presence of potential devices in teaching and learning continues to enhance learning and the ways in which teachers can teach students better. Since the means of acquiring knowledge is dynamic, education today cannot be fixed or do without technology as evidenced in computer application in education.

Computer has become the symbol of education and a means of instructional delivery in the recent times. Apart from the use of technology in teaching and learning situation in the classroom, there have been other educational opportunities brought by the innovations and changes that currently dominate education. The significant development in distance education for example, has been fostered by improved use of computer and the internet in almost all the environments where formal and non-formal teaching and learning take place. With the increasing innovations in the use of networked computers, the internet in the home, office, school etc, more learners are using these resources ever than before for learning both in developed and developing nations. Access to education, information, and other learning resources are no more problems for many people regardless their locations, economic background, work or level of education. In view of this assertion, an attempt to identify some current trends in educational technology as it affects teaching and learning is pertinent.

New Trends and their Relevance in Teaching and Learning

The Internet

The internet technology has made the world a global village and education accessible from every location of the world through e-learning. The internet is basically a network of networked computers all over the world. Most educational institutions, learners, business, government agencies and many others have connected their computers to the internet making it a large network of networked computers.

In view of this development, significant growth has been currently recorded in educational technology. E-learning, e-tutoring, outsourcing education services and the development of digital libraries which resulted from internet services have opened the door of teaching and learning with special approach to the adult and professional labour force whose needs may not be adequately met by the conventional classroom teaching and learning. The internet technology an emerging trend in educational technology has therefore come to make tremendous impact on education and development at the personal, institutional, national and international levels in both developed and developing nations, Nigeria is not an exception. Through internet application in teaching and learning, the demand for “Education for All” in Nigeria can be met.

E-Learning

The emergence of internet connectivity has made e-learning a major trend in educational technology. E-learning is the teaching supports management and assessment of students on programmes of study that involves significant use of online technologies (Tech-learn, 2000). To Horton (2005), e-learning is the use of internet and digital technologies to create experiences that educate our fellow human beings. Similarly, e-learning is:

- i. the use of electronic technology to deliver, support and enhance teaching and learning.
- ii. the use of new multi-media technologies and the internet to improve the quality of learning by facilitating access to resources and services as well as remote exchanges and collaboration.
- iii. if someone is learning in a way that uses Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), he is doing e-learning.

Based on the above explanations, e-learning is an approach that involves online and offline instructional delivery systems using computer-mediated and electronic devices enhancements. E-learning occurs through the internet and intranet. It is an instructional delivery technique through electronic devices such as the computer using Web browser like Microsoft internet explorer or Netscape navigator. This can incorporate multi-media platforms such as CD Rom or DVD offline.

As a trend, e-learning is very useful in open and distance learning. Most instructional texts for e-learners are converted into electronic format and placed on the website for learners to read, download or print and then go to read. E-learning can occur through online (internet) or offline (through CD). Also Local Area Network (LAN) makes a way on the internet for institutions to practice e-learning. E-learning, web-based learning or internet –based learning involves students and instructors who are widely separated geographically, who come with different backgrounds and who may not be able to have lectures in a traditional classroom schedule. It is technology-reliant system where online access is a prerequisite for students to have their course materials, study support, lectures and source information through virtual library.

With the development of this trend, many universities in Europe and America now offer courses and degrees online. For instance, University of Phoenix online offers about 25 programmes for distance learners. This new trend of instructional delivery benefits both developed and developing nations such as Nigeria.

E-Tutoring

E-tutoring has become a preferred method of extending training and learning support to learners beyond classroom in the recent time. It can be defined as teaching support, management and assessment of students on programmes of study that involves technologies (TechLearn 2000). For students who are feeling bored in the traditional classrooms, e-tutoring can be an outstanding way to help them build self-esteem and the desire to learn. E-tutoring is different from tutoring in terms of

Emerging Trends in Educational Technology: The Relevance in Teaching and Learning in Nigeria

the involvement of technology. Other differences are in terms of time, distance and specific technologies adopted in learning activities and in managing and supporting students learning online. The main feature of e-tutoring is to facilitate collaborative learning and group working activities which may be separated in terms of time, distance and specific ICT facilities adopted for creating, sharing and discussing learning online. E-tutors are essential and appreciated by their learners in online learning as they add human-face to the online materials. This makes the students to have confidence that there are expert tutors. This in turn, leads to higher completion and retention rates.

E-tutoring has now emerged as a new medium of instruction utilizing the infinite scope of ICT that has transformed today's approach to education and teaching. This has worked in India, China, USA and other developed nations. The purpose is to exploit the potentials of ICT in new global market and to provide flexible and accessible learning through distance education. The percentage of parents turning to e-tutoring for their children is increasing and gaining popularity. Similarly, online tutoring agencies like outsourcingtutorialservices.com are also increasing. outsourcingtutorialservices.com for example, has a very pragmatic and professional strategy on how to tutor different types of students in different subjects. The record of testimony from thousands of successful students who have been transformed from below average or average to above average or outstanding students with the help of e-tutoring services speaks for itself. E-tutoring has solution for parents who are worried about their children's educational standards. It also extends job opportunities to teachers outside the teaching profession (Outsourcing Tutoring Services, 2006).

Outsourcing Education

Outsourcing is the concept of taking internal company functions and paying an outside firm to handle them. It is the practice of having goods and services provided by a person or persons outside a firm. Outsourcing is also the performance of production activities that was previously done inside a firm or plant outside that firm or plant. Outsourcing is done to save money, improve quality or free company resources for other activities. Developing countries such as India or China benefit from the patronage of companies that outsource to them in terms of increased wages, job prestige, education and quality of life.

Outsourcing has made itself accessible to education. As a current trend in educational technology, outsourcing education is the concept of importing education from other countries. It means taking internal educational services and paying outside institutions or tutors to handle them online. In this trend, American students are now importing educational services. For example, thousands of US students such as Del Monte are increasingly relying on foreign tutors to boost their grades and scores in schools. The tutors communicate with students over the internet round the clock, making education the newest industry to be outsourced to other countries (Power, Kevin and Desouza, 2005). One of the major advantages is the ability to purchase intellectual capital. In view of the above assertion, outsourcing has actually penetrated the field of education where online tutoring through the internet has emerged as a medium of interaction utilizing an infinite scope of ICT beyond the classroom.

Virtual Library

Virtual library has become a major trend and source of information to online learners. The term virtual library is variously referred to as electronic library, digital library or paperless library. This term imply the use of modern ICT to collect, store, search, retrieve and disseminate information to large number of learners without limitation of time and space. Virtual library is a situation in which information are stored in electronic format and disseminated through the internet rather than on paper or other localized media (Aniebo, 2004). Virtual library is therefore an electronic library provided online by a conventional library for learners to read books and access other digital archival collections.

Library is the heart of the education enterprise (FRN, 2004). The universities and other educational institutions in America and other nations now have virtual library for their students to download book, journals etc, to read or for research purposes. Since distance learners do not usually have libraries, virtual library has come to provide book collections to online learners, even for conventional educational institutions online. This implies that any on-campus learner or e-learners who have access to the internet will exploit the benefits of virtual library globally from any location.

Virtual library is the product of rapid development in computer and telecommunication technologies accessible from any part of the world. Already, virtual library project was launched in Nigeria in 2002 (Aniebo, 2004), and some of tertiary institutions now have virtual library. When the virtual library project is fully put in place, many conventional libraries in Nigeria will be digitized, and this will serve as a major source of information to learners.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Educational technology in Nigeria and the world over is still relatively new and experiencing rapid growth. The current trends identified here are means of acquiring education online. The awareness will enable those opting for distance learning to exploit the benefits of these trends.

It is therefore recommended that the federal and state governments should make internet accessible from anywhere in Nigeria. This will enable people to utilize the education opportunities provided by the trends.

References

- Aniebo, M. U. (2004). *The Use of the Library and Information Technology for Higher Education*. Owerri: Springfield publishers Ltd.
- Ely, D. P. (2002). *Trends in Educational Technology*. New York: Eric Clearing House on Information and Technology, Syracuse University.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERDC Publishers.
- Power, M. J., Kavin, C and Desouza, C. B. (2005). Developing Superior Outsourcing Programs. *IT Professional*, 7 (4) 32 – 38.
- Tech Learn (2000). Online Tutorial briefing paper. Available at [http://www.techlearn.org.uk/cgi-bin/techspec.p\(?\)=7](http://www.techlearn.org.uk/cgi-bin/techspec.p(?)=7).
- Outsourcing Tutorial Services (2006). Live online Instruction for children. Available at <http://www.outsourcingtutorialservices.com>
- Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2001). Springfield Mass: Merriam –Webster Inc.