

IMPORTANCE OF E-LEARNING IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BAYELSA STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

The Introduction of Multimedia technologies and Internet in learning has been observed as a means of improving accessibility and quality of delivery and learning among the students in secondary schools in Nigeria. Thus e-learning is a new paradigm shift in educational sector for the purpose of advancing the knowledge base. The beginning of 21st century has heralded the educational technology that has facilitated e-learning among secondary schools in the developing countries. This paper examine the importance of e-learning in public secondary school in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The paper also looked at the deplorable state of educational system due to inadequate teaching, learning facilities and infrastructure, most libraries in the secondary schools have audio-visual learning materials that are hardly utilized as a result of lack of awareness on the part of the students, where teacher determines what to teach, how to teach and less concerned about the students at the receiving end and However, ICT should be seen as a tool for teachers to use and not as a substitution of teachers. Therefore recommends that more effort should be made by the management of secondary schools in providing e-learning facilities in their institutions and students should be encouraged to make a proper use of these facilities by giving them e-learning related assignments and projects.

Keywords: e-learning, Multimedia, Internet

Education is a key factor for sustainable development (Chimombo 2005). The significance of education, especially in developing countries, is increasing because of progressing pressure to catch up with the developed world regarding, for example, global competitiveness (Hawkins 2002). Predictably, education settings are different in developing countries than in developed countries, such as low quality of of education and narrow possibilities in attending schools in rural areas because of far distances and high opportunity costs (Ibid 2005). Chimombo, 2005 opines that country-specific circumstances have to be improved regarding compulsory and free education to foster general access to education. In Article 26 of the 1948 UN universal declaration of human rights the right of obligatory and free education for everyone is already committed (UN Human Rights 1948).

Every year, more of the world's people become connected to the network, it's bandwidth increases and its use becomes more integrated to all that happens in the globe. Connectivity to this network has becomes key to opportunity, success and fulfillment for individuals. Kenya has defined a national ICT policy with a view of creating an e-enabled and knowledge-based society by the year 2015. Just like the technology has changed the world, it is now changing the learning and teaching environment.

A broad range of learning approaches exists already, for example, e-learning, blended learning (Maier, 2007), and distance learning which utilize information and communication technology (ICT). The use of ICT can benefit, for example, students in rural areas by having them attend classes as distance learners and motivating them to learn like the "Group Learning Sets" (GLS) initiative offers. Regarding this, the potential of e-learning seems very assuring, but because of gaps between developed and developing countries knowledge transfer is not only difficult but also costly. E-Learning denotes the use of ICT by teachers and learners. Schmidt 2005 holds that e-learning consists of conventional training, such as courses, ad-hoc training, selected learning subjects, formalization through document and community formation which can be achieved via social software.

According to case studies, there are already a number of e-learning programs offered in developing countries (Kohn et al. 2008). These programs are developed by various national and international initiatives, for example, the group learning sets initiated by Computer Aid International in collaboration with Kenyatta University. The growth of e-learning programs according to Lockwood

and Gooley, 2002 is driven by the need for and potential of providing education in less expensive ways, increased access to information, effective and greater flexibility.

Stephenson, 2001 posits that there is little systematic research into the overall effectiveness of e-learning as a learning medium despite the great interest in it. He acknowledges that while there is much more work to be done, a variety of e-learning courses aimed at making sustainable development a reality have been developed and demonstrate how e-learning can reach thousands if not millions of minds and potentially plant the seeds of change.

How E-learning can Improve Qualitative Education in Bayelsa state

Improving the quality of education and training is a critical issue, particularly at a time of educational expansion. ICTs can enhance the quality of education in several ways by increasing learner motivation and engagement by facilitating the acquisition of basic skills, and by enhancing teacher training (Wadi and Sonia 2002). ICTs are also transformational tools which when used appropriately, can promote the shift to a learner-centered environment. The following are some of the ways in which ICT has enhance quality education.

Motivation to learn

ICTs such as video, television and multimedia computer software that combine text, sound and colourful moving images can be used to provide challenging and authentic content that will engage the student in the learning process and take collaboration.

Interactive radio likewise, make use of sound effects songs dramatization, comic skits and other performance conventions to compel the students to listen and become involved in the lessons being delivered. More so than any other type of ICT, networked computers with internet connectivity can increase learner motivation as it combines the media richness and interactivity of other ICTs with the opportunity to connect with real people and to participate in real world events.

Facilitating the acquisition of basic skills

The transmission of basic skills and concepts that are the foundation of higher order thinking skills and creativity can be facilitated by ICT's through drill and practice. Educational television programs such as "who want to be a million " Nigeria's biggest thought provoking programme, enlightens people because of the questions that are required to answered before the cash price is awarded. Questions are drawn from all works of life ranging from religious, cultural, educational to contemporary issues, thereby facilitating the acquisition of basic issues amongst populace.

Enhancing teacher training

ICT's have also been used to improve access to and the quality of teacher training. For example institutions like the Cyber Teacher Training Center (CCTC) in South Korea are taking advantage of the internet to provide better professional development opportunities to in-service teachers. The government funded CCTC, established in 1977, offers self-directed, self-paced web-based courses for primary and secondary school teachers, courses include " Computers in the information society" Education Reform " and future society Education " online tutorials are also offered , with some courses requiring occasional face to face meetings (Jung, 2002).

Challenges of E-learning in secondary schools in Bayelsa state

In spite of the bright prospect of e-learning in the state, it is so worrisome that there are some hurdles militating against the effective use of the educational technology in Bayelsa state some of the these obstacles are:

Lack of qualified teachers to teach ICT in secondary schools

The demand for ICT learning has been tremendous and the number of teachers who are trained to teach ICT cannot meet the demand. There are more students willing to be taught computing skills than there are teachers to transfer the skills.

Lack of computers

Computers are still very expensive and despite spirited efforts by the government agencies, NGO corporate organisations and individuals to donate computer to as many schools as possible, there still remain a big percentage of the schools unable to purchase computers for use by their pupils

Lack of Electricity

Many schools are still yet not connected to electricity: Nigeria being a developing, the government has not been able to connect all parts of the country to the national electricity grid. Consequently, those schools that fall under such areas are left handicapped and may not be able to offer computer studies.

Computers are still expensive

In a country with high rate of inflation majority of the individuals and schools cannot afford to buy a computer and consider it as luxury item, more expensive than a Tv, while second hand computers cost as ₦55,000 naira and branded new computers been sold between ₦90,000 and above.

Broken down Computers

While a good number of schools have benefitted from number donated used computers, they have not been adequately equipped with the same on maintenance and repair, hence its very common to see a school computer lab full of broken down computers, some repairable and some not, this has actually been a major problem and the government has not put strict measures on any person, NGO or corporate bodies willing to donate 2nd hand computers (it is seen as a dumping ground) e-waste management.

Burglary

The fact that computers are still very expensive in Nigeria, this makes them a target for thieves who usually have ready markets to another party at a much less figure. This has made many schools to incur extra expenses trying to burglar proof the computer rooms. This extra expenses makes some schools shy away from purchasing for their students

Lack of internet or slow connectivity

Most schools are not able to connect to the World Wide Web, due to the high costs involved in the connectivity. On average, it may cost approximately \$150 per month to connect to about 15 computers on a bandwidth of 128/64kbps. This is considered as very expensive for a very slow speed.

Increased moral degradation

Internet pornography, cyber bullying and other anti-social behaviors is a worrying emerging problem. The dilemma which arises in providing educational technology stems from a lack of financial resources and a limited distributive capacity. In addition, Nigerian government has not been able to employ teachers, and provide resources to keep up with this demand. This brings about compromised quality of education. Furthermore, Nigerian government faces the predicament of educational expansion that correspond with economic development. Despite the setbacks, access to education is a strong focus of the Nigerian government.

Importance of E-learning

E-learning is an effective means of self-development and it also facilitates academic performance in secondary schools.

1.E-learning has completely transformed the way in which learning is imparted to students. Unlike traditional chalk and board method of teaching, e-learning makes learning simpler, easier, and more effective.

2.It will also help students to develop potentials for rigorous academic studies and research purposes which are basically needed skills for successful academic pursuits.

3. Assignments and research works that are meant to encourage students to the most effective use of the e-learning facilities provided by the school frequently be given to the students as this will help to significantly improve their self-independent in their respective academic endeavors.

4. E-learning has improve accessibility efficiency and quality of learning by facilitating access to information resources and services as well as remote exchanges and collaboration.

5. E-learning as the potentials to revolutionise the way we teach and how we learn.

6. It helps to make available a greater variety of learning resources ,allows electronic access to course materials, carry out evaluations and online interaction between the school and students thereby fostering communication and co-operation among stakeholder.

7. Online Learning Accommodates Everyone's Needs

The online method of learning is best suited for everyone. This digital revolution has led to remarkable changes in how the content is accessed, consumed , discussed and shared. Online educational courses can be taken up by office goers and housewives too, at the time that suits them. Depending on their availability and comfort, Many people choose to learn at weekends or evenings.

8. Lectures Can Be Taken Any Number of Times

Unlike classroom teaching, with online learning you can access the content an unlimited number of times. This is especially required at the time of revision when preparing for an exam.

In traditional form of learning, if you cannot attend the lectures whenever you want with ease.

9. Offers Access to updated content

A prime benefit of learning online is that it makes sure that you are in synchronisation with the modern learners. This enables the learner to access updated content whenever they want it.

10. Quick delivery of lessons

Elearning is a way to provide quick delivery of lessons. As compared to traditional classroom teaching method, this mode has relatively quick delivery cycles. This indicates that the time required to learn is reduced to 25%-60% of what is required in traditional learning. There are some of the reasons why the learning time is reduced by elearning:

Lessons starts quickly and also wrapped up in a single learning session. This enables training program easily to roll out within a few weeks , or sometime even days.

Learners can define their own speed on learning instead of the following the speed of the whole group.

Saves time as a student does not need to travel to the training venue. You can learn at the comfort of your own place.

Students can choose to study specific and relevant areas of the learning material without focusing on each and every area. For Example, they can skip certain areas they do not want to learn.

11. Scalability

E-learning helps in creating and communicating new training, policies, concepts and ideas.

Whether it is for formal education or entertainment, elearning is a very quick way to learning!

12. Reduce costs

E-learning emis cost effective as compared to traditional forms of learning. The reason for this price reduction is because learning through this mode happens quickly and easily. A lot of training time is reduced with respect to trainers travel, course materials, and accommodation.

This cost effectiveness also helps in enhancing the profitability of an organisation. Also, when you are studying at your own place, you relieved from paying for travel expenses(e.g accommodation) when training happens in another city/state and/or external learning material.

13.Consistency

Elearning enables educators to get a higher degree of coverage to communicate the message in a consistent way for their target audience. This ensures that all learners receive the same type of training with this learning mode.

14. Effectiveness

E-learning has a positive influence on an organisation's profitability. It makes it easy to grasp the content and digest it.

It returns in improved scores on certification, tests, or other types of evaluation.

Higher number of students who achieve pass' or mastery' level.

Enhanced ability to learn and implement the new processes or knowledge at the workplace.

Help in retaining information for a longer time.

15.Less impact on environment

As e-learning is a paperless way of learning,it protects the environment to a lot of extent.

As per a study done on e-learning courses, it has been found that distance based learning programs consumed around 90% less power and generated 85% less amount of co2 emissions as compared to the traditional campus based educational courses. With e-learning, there is no need to cut trees for obtaining paper. Thus, e-learning is highly eco-friendly way of learning.

Conclusion

E-learning has every sign of long survival as long as such digital devices become more available. That means when the devices become more affordable, the connectivity bandwidths become widely used and less constraint, the multimedia application will prosper. The survival of educational institutions in the 21st century will increasingly rely on various forms of electronic delivery system and communication facilities available in market that are required to make education to be more flexible.

The introduction and use of ICT's in schools have a positive impact on teaching, learning and research. Despite the roles of ICT's can play in education, schools in Nigeria have yet to extensively adopt them for teaching and learning. Efforts geared towards integration of ICT's into the school system have not had much problems such as poor policy and project implementation strategies and poor information infrastructures militate against these efforts for e-learning to succeed in Nigeria there is need for the existence of befitting infrastructure and some degree of viable connectivity.

Recommendation

In other to ensure ICTs are widely adopted and used in Bayelsa state secondary school system, the following efforts should be taken.

i.Secondary schools should make a consorted efforts to provide e-learning environment that would enhance students' academic performance.

ii.Assignments and research work that are meant to encourage students to the most effective use to the e-learning facilities provided by the school should frequently be given to the students as this will help to significantly improve their self-independence in their respective academic endeavors.

iii.Efforts should be made by the Ministry of Education to post teachers skilled in ICTs to teach and to impact ICT skills to the student.

iv.Government should provide institutions at all levels in the country with adequate information-technology facilities.

v.Government should properly fund institutions so as to be able to compete with other institutions abroad.

vi.Government should ensure adequate electricity supply in schools

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