

Full Length Research Paper

E-learning technologies and adult education in Nigeria

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The internet has proved to be one of the greatest learning resources available in the 21st Century. Modern education is becoming progressively more dynamic. Internet has helped man to see the other part of the world at the click of a mouse. Various forms of instructional technologies such as the overhead projector, opaque projector, filmstrip and slide projectors, radio and television to mention but a few have been used as media in instructional process. In recent times, e-learning emerged as the fastest means by which one can teach and learn online. This paper explores the concept of e-learning. It outlined and discussed the needed e-learning resources for the usage of academic adult educators. Some of them are computer, compact disc, read-only-memory (CD-ROM) packages, videophone system and digital library. It enumerated the benefits of e-learning to academic adult educators such as collaborative studies, virtual library. It recommends among other things that the government of Nigeria should provide computerized/digital libraries for accessibility of information in the internet.

Key words: Nigeria, adult education, e-learning, learner.

INTRODUCTION

Society is rapidly transforming into one which is based on information, requiring its citizens to be familiar with and at ease with information based resources and manipulations. According to Adebola (2008) for a Nigerian learner not to be left out in what is happening in the world, he/she has to key into the use and application of internet and this has to start from the foundation of education. Technology is therefore changing at an unprecedented rate and without proper machinery in place; one stands the risk of being left behind. Adebola further stated that people no longer necessarily go to library to obtain information or knowledge because internet are now available to the user at his/her home, office and cybercafé centres. Bakare (2007) opined that computer assisted learning is one of the realities of today and learners in higher institutions who have more access to computer systems are making new use of them just as universities are struggling to upgrade, update and install virtual libraries. This is because technology is advancing rapidly and making inroads into personal, business, academic and social life. Bello et al. (2004) in Bakare (2007) commented that the computer revolution and information technology have transformed systems in areas of communication, teaching, storage and retrieval of data. All modern technologies open new doors and

various opportunities for teaching and learning at every level (Bakare, 2007).

According to Bakare (2007), there is still a lack of consensus about what e-learning represents and its boundaries are not clear as it intersects numerous fields. Bakare however stated that e-learning is learning that takes place in cyberspace. Stockley (2003) opined that e-learning is the delivery of a learning, training or education programme by electronic means. It involves the use of a computer or electronic device like the mobile telephone etc. It is a fast growing way of learning with the help of computers and internet connection. Rosenberg (2001) defined it as the use of the internet technology to deliver a broad array of solutions that enhance knowledge and performance. It is usually defined in relation to technology. It involves all forms of network and wireless techniques.

According to Ani (2003), an adult educator is one who helps an adult or adults to learn anything useful to the adult learner or learners. Ani grouped adult educators into three types namely:

1. Adult educators who work with specific adult target population. This group of adult educators is mainly part-time teachers, leaders, volunteers or agents. Examples include leaders of adult clubs or associations. Others are

primary school teachers who work as instructors of adults in adult literacy classes.

2. Specialists in adult education but are trained in other disciplines and not in adult education. The disciplines where they are trained may be in agriculture, health or government. These groups of specialists are mainly concerned in educating adults in their own fields alone. Examples of this group are the health workers known as doctors, nurses and health superintendents.

3. Adult educators who are trained in adult education to act as full-time adult educators or help to develop researches for the field of adult education. Examples of persons of this group are adult education lecturers and professors in the universities.

They are trained extensively in academics and have professional experience in adult education. They are usually found in tertiary institutions as lecturers, researchers or educators in adult education.

BENEFITS OF E-LEARNING TO ACADEMIC ADULT EDUCATORS

E-learning is convenient and portable

Kerman (2004) is of the view that online learning does not need physical attendance. Learning is self-paced. One can study at home, work or on the road, one can read materials online or download them for reading later. Adebola (2008) stated that people no longer necessarily go to the library to obtain information or knowledge because internet are now available to the user at his/her home, office and cyber café centres.

Greater collaboration

Technology tools make collaboration among academicians much easier. Borofield and Akinyede (2005) maintained that since many researches or projects involve collaborative learning, the online environment is far easier and often much comfortable to work in since learners do not have to be in face-to-face setting. This will widen the intellectual horizon of the adult educator with relative ease.

Increased access

With e-learning, adult educators of highest caliber can share their knowledge across borders allowing students or learners to attend courses across physical, political and economic boundaries. Recognized experts also have the opportunity of making information available internationally to anyone interested at minimum cost (Borofield and Akinyede, 2005).

Developing skills and competencies

With the use of e-learning, academic adult educators can also develop the skills and competencies needed in their various professions. Academic adult educators are ensured to have the digital literacy skills required in their disciplines and careers.

Human resources in various disciplines

With names and address known, specialists in various fields of learning can be found or located in the internet. They may be required to send their papers online or to come physically as a resource person for lecture delivery.

E-LEARNING FACILITIES

E-mail

Another name for e-mail is electronic mail. Mails can be sent or received through e-mail without having both the participants at the same time. One can send and receive e-mail in any sector of the economy at all times. What it requires is that any person who has an e-mail box has at least one e-mail address which is a cyberspace equivalent of a post office address. Examples of some e-mails sites are yahoo, hotmail, Eudora, P.mail etc. Binary information may be attached to e-mail. Examples are pictures, sounds, word processor files and programmes. The use of e-mail can enhance teaching and instructional communication. This is because textual materials, pictures, sounds, graphics, files and programmes can be sent to the learners. Also, questionnaire can be sent for research purposes. In addition, written projects, seminar, conference and workshop papers can be sent through e-mail and materials for teaching and learning and for tutorials. Using e-mail will enable learners to have feedback from instructors more quickly than messages sent by postal mail. Learners can read messages at their convenience and can easily store them for later references.

CD-ROM packages

CD-ROM means Compact Disk Read –Only Memory. It is a secondary storage disc and a product of information and communication technology (ICT). Herbert (2007) explained that computer based learning involves the use of CD-ROM packages for teaching and learning. It can be used to store huge amounts of data like text books, periodicals, dictionaries and encyclopedia. Ojo-Igbinoba (1995) pointed out that the biggest assemblage of library catalogue cabinets in the world now can be contained in a few compact discs (CD-ROM) of about 4.72 inches in diameter and 0.7 ounce in weight. The CD-ROM is found useful for academic adult educators. For example, a CD-

ROM package on Media Techniques in Adult Education can be very useful for distance education classes.

Videophone system

Videophone system is the use of video conferencing computers, effective and efficient telecommunication facilities for lecture delivery. It enables the instructor and the learners see each other face-to-face in the screen and have classroom interaction electronically. In other words, it creates virtual classroom. The learner writes his own lesson notes using his own computer as the teleconferencing is going on; while the educator must be sensitive to the teaching styles of teleconferencing in every teletutorial session. In this manner, lecture delivery and instructional communication is done with relative ease.

Computer

A computer is an electronic device which is capable of accepting input data, processes the data, stores and retrieves the data when the need arises. Fuori and Gioia (1991) pointed that computer networks allow users in various geographical locations to share programmes, data and equipment. A computer connected to the internet can be used to access education websites such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It can also be used for virtual library and for collecting any information pertaining to education. The computer applications such as the computer assisted instruction (CAI) can be used in distance education for games and simulations, tutorial and problem-solving, drill and practices. Another one is computer managed instruction (CMI) which can be used for marking, scoring, grading and for keeping of learners records of tests, quizzes and examinations.

Digital library

With the internet, library can be visited online. Books of various sizes, journals, magazines, newspapers can be read online. For instance, Daily Sun Newspaper can be read online at www.sunnewsonline.com. With the digital library, academic adult educators will be able to get access to various books which may be useful for his/her lectures and for researches.

CONCLUSION

In order not to be left behind in the global world, academic adult educators needed to be more aware and expose to e-learning. E-learning is the sophisticated and

fastest means of learning. Academic adult educators must be exposed to the endless possibilities that e-learning holds to optimize their use of computers instead of their narrow usage. This paper has tried to examine the usage of e-learning among academic adult educators in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper also shows the benefits of e-learning to academic adult educators. It also reveals the e-learning resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. That government of Nigeria should provide computerized/digital libraries for accessibility of information in the internet and for uploading and downloading of files at all times.
2. The government of Nigeria should tackle the problem of power failure by installing Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) devices to ensure steady use of electricity.
3. Academic adult educators should make sure that they are computer literates in order to meet up with the global technologies.
4. Various bodies running adult education programmes should organize training of adequate and qualified personnel and instructors from time to time to keep abreast with technological development.

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