

## **Adult education and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects.**

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**Abstract:** *Adult education is a versatile area of study that needs to be strengthened with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment. This is so because adult education touches all aspects of human endeavours that demand the use of technological equipment. The integration of ICT equipment in adult education will engender positive development in actualizing societal goals and associating with the terrain of computer age. This paper, therefore, examined the benefits, limitations, challenges and prospects of integrating ICT in adult education. The paper also came up with way forward and drawn conclusion.*

**Keywords:** *Adult education, Information and Communication Technology, Challenges and Prospects*

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### **I. Introduction**

Adult education is expected to address the socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental problems besieging humanity in their various societies. This is so because adults are the major occupants of the production sectors of the economy. Fasakun (2006) observed that adult education is not concerned with preparing people for life but rather with helping or assisting people (adults) to live more successfully as useful and acceptable members of their societies and contribute meaningfully to the development of those societies. As can be seen from the information above, adult education should be re-positioned to excessively launch the present adults into the orbit where they can respond to the challenges brought in by information and communication technology in order to make meaningful contributions to national development. Nzeneri (2010) clearly stated that:

*Our 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterised by an upsurge of information technology which dictates the pace of development and surely we have not stopped talking about technological transfer. A century where communication and infrastructural facilities such as telephones, fax and computer networking are tools that are turning our world into a global village, where classroom may no longer play prominent roles as major access to education.*

From the above information, we can see that the internet has been beneficial in mobilizing people globally at the grassroots to take a common stand on global issues of common concerns. Igbo (2008) observes that adult education is an instrument for helping the active population worldwide with information and communication technology (ICT), which is a decisive tool for the smooth integration of Nigerian economy in the global economy.

ICT definition at this point becomes necessary to make this discussion intelligent and clearly identify the challenges and prospects of integrating ICT into adult education in Nigeria. Onyekwe (2006) saw ICT as a broad based electronic technology that is used for collecting, storing, processing and transmitting information in various forms. ICT is, therefore, technology that generally supports the individual's ability to manage and communicate information electronically. Thus, for adults not to be left out in what is happening in the world, they to key in into the use and application of this technology and this can only be achieved through the integration of ICT into adult education in Nigeria. This paper, therefore, focuses on the following: benefits of ICT in adult education, limitations of ICT use in adult education, challenges of ICT integration in adult education and prospects of ICT use in adult education in Nigeria.

### **II. Benefits of ICT in Adult Education**

Kozma (2005) noted that the benefits of ICT in adult education are that ICT can:

1. Offer opportunities for more adult-learner-centred teaching. There is a common belief that the use of ICT in adult education will contribute to more constructivist learning and an increase in activity and greater responsibility of the adult learner (Volman, 2005).
2. Provide the adult educator with new sources of information and knowledge which will enhance the process of and practices of teaching adults. This is because acquisition of ICT knowledge and skills can help the

adult educators to obtain basic knowledge of principles of teaching and learning and the skills to apply those principles in teaching – learning situations.

3. Provide adult learners the opportunity for distance learning country-wide with on-line educational materials even in the face of their tight schedule of activities.
4. Help in providing adult-learners with additional resources to assist resource-based learning e.g., the fax, telephone, computers, e-mail, internet, www(World Wide Web) etc.
5. Broaden access to quality educational services for adults at all levels of adult education.
6. Help in producing ICT literate adults who will be useful to themselves and contribute meaningfully to the society in which they belong.
7. Produce adults who are capable of working and participating in the new economies and societies arising from ICT and related development.
8. Help education policy makers in formulating and execution of educational policies which will be inclusive in nature to bridge the gap in education.
9. Widen the range of opportunities for the marginalized and the disadvantaged members in the society by opening access to knowledge.
10. Encourage self-directed learning because adults can engage in personal learning by using their personal computers or internet connection.
11. Help adult learners to have access to tutorial software.
12. Help in improving the effectiveness and efficiency in adult education system in Nigeria as a whole.

In addition, adult learners can use ICT in business transactions and other human endeavours activities that require ICT for their accomplishment and achievement of goals.

### **III. Limitations of ICT use in Adult Education**

ICT as modern technology that simplifies and facilitates human activities is not only advantageous in many respects but also has many limitations. The limitations can be categorized as adult educators' related, adult learners' related and technology related. All of them potentially limit the benefits of ICT to adult education.

Adult educators' attitude plays an important role in the teaching learning process that utilizes computers and internet connections. Of course, some adult educators may have positive attitudes to the technology, but refrain from using it in teaching due to low self-efficacy, tendency to consider themselves not qualified to teach with technology. In this respect, Ormrod (2006) defined self-efficacy as the extent or strength of one's belief in one's ability to complete tasks and reach goals.

Adult educators' resistance and lack of enthusiasm to use ICT in adult education is also another limitation. Furthermore, many adult educators may not have the required Information and Technology (IT) skills and feel uncomfortable nor do they have trainings needed to use the technology in their teaching. This is a drawback to adult education curriculum enhancement, ICT teaching – learning process and overall academic success of the adult learners and institution. In this era of global technology, adult educators and adult learners are expected to be at least computer literate, adults in the community to be ICT compliant as well as adult learners. People with disabilities should be equipped with assistive technology skill to be able to operate successfully in their communities (Nnazor, 2015).

On the other hand, the limitation of ICT use in adult education is related to adult learners' behaviour. Appropriate use of computer and the internet by adult learners has significant positive effects on adult learners' attitude and their behaviour. Learners tend to misuse the technology for leisure time activities and have less time to learn and study. Yousef and Dahamani (2008) described online gaming, use of face book, chat rooms and other communication channels as perceived draw backs of ICT use in adult education because learners easily switch to these sites at the expense of their study. Internet access at home for instance, may be a distraction because of chat rooms and online games, reducing the time spent in learning (Kulik, 1994). For example, while adult learners use the internet, it may confuse them by the multiplicity of information to choose from. As a result, the adult educator spends much time to control them from website unrelated to the learning content.

The other limitation of ICT use in adult education is technology related. The high cost of technology and maintenance of facilities, high cost of spare parts, virus attacks of software and the computer, interruptions of internet connections and poor supply of electric power are among the technology related limitations of ICTs use in adult education.

### **Challenges of ICT integration in Adult Education**

The integration of ICT in adult education may face various challenges with respect to policy, planning, infrastructure, learning content and language, capacity-building and financing (Fasakun, 2006). ICT – enhanced adult education requires clearly stated objectives for mobilization of resources and political commitment of the concerned bodies (Igbo, 2008). Other challenges of the level of policy and planning are identification of

stakeholders and harmonization of efforts across different interest groups, the piloting of the chosen ICT – based model, and specification of existing sources of financing and the development of strategies for generating financial resources to support ICT use over a long term. The infrastructural challenges that may exist are absence of appropriate buildings and rooms to house the technology, lack of/and epileptic power supply, and continuous disruptions in telephone lines.

With respect to challenges of capacity building, adult educators lack professional training facilities for them to be ICT skilled and computer literate. In fact, one impeding factor of ICT integration in adult education is the skill gap of the people implementing it (Nnazor, 2005). For instance, adult educators need professional development to gain skills with particular applications of ICT integration into existing curricula, curricula changes related to ICT use, changes in adult educators roles and on underpinning adult educational theories such as adult learners-centred learning.

Furthermore, learning contents and language also pose challenge to integration of ICT in adult education. Content development is a critical area that educators overlook (Ibeh, 2008). In integrating ICT in adult education, we have to take cognisance of the relevance of the learning content to the target groups. With respect to language, English is the dominant language in the developing countries, and this is one barrier in the integration of ICT to adult education.

Another great challenge is that financing ICT in adult education programmes requires large capital investment. Most adult education centres especially in the rural areas are not equipped with ICT gadgets and tools, computers, internet facilities, assistive technologies like Braille for the virtually improved, mobile wheel chairs for the handicapped adults, among others as a result of huge capital involved.

### **Prospects of ICT integration to Adult Education in Nigeria**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is having a revolutionary impact on educational methodology globally (Dabesaki, 2005). Dabesaki noted that this revolutionary trend is not widespread and needs to be strengthened to reach a large percentage of the population regardless of age or socio-economic background. Kinuttia (2008) stressed that adult education programmes have usually been carried out via radio, television, satellite and instructor-led lessons, but more recently some organizations have incorporated newer technologies. He pointed out that adult education programmes are now delivered through access centres such as community radio, telecentres, and community multi-media centres (CMCs). He went future to state that, the resuscitation of the National Open University (NOU) of Nigeria is part of the commitment of the present government to ensure access to education by a large percentage of the population.

Nigerian government is aware of the need for ICT development and training to boost the manpower general workforce development, improve the people's wellbeing and sustain the economy. As a result, many governments, private and non-governmental institutions in Nigeria are striving to assist in the provision of ICT training programmes at all levels including work environments (Ibe, 2008).

The Federal Government in 2001 approved a national information technology policy to solve ICT problems in the country. Government also established National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) which is charged with implementation of ICT policies (Anie & Achugbue, 2009). The call for ICT policies in Nigeria is to allow individual citizens, including adults' access the training and services connected to ICT. In the light of this, the government set up the Nigerian National ICT for Development (ICT4D) strategic action plan committee to develop a new ICT policy for development and for all education sectors, including adult education sector.

### **Way Forward**

1. There is need for adult educators and special education specialists to collaborate to develop ICT literacy primers, e-learning and distance education programmes, assistive technology and therapy services for adults and exceptional individuals within the community. This will enable learning take place in the life of these individuals.
2. ICT integration to adult education should be emphasised, fully recognized and have affordable physical structures, facilities and resource materials readily available to most adult education centres in Nigeria.
3. There is need for the government to increase the electricity / power supply situation in Nigeria so that there will be opportunities for significant improvements and increase in ICT awareness among the rural and urban dwellers.
4. Adult educators should be trained on the use of ICT facilities and assistive technology. This will help individual adults and the exceptional adults benefit from such training.
5. ICT policies in the country should be enforced by the government through her agencies like the National Information and Technology Development (NITDA), especially as it concerns the adult education sector. The agency should collaborate with different government agencies to develop and promote public-private partnership for integration of ICT into adult education programmes in Nigeria.

6. Emphasis should be laid to the learning contents to reflect the needs of the adults in the communities.
7. Government should establish National ICT education, training and awareness initiative to promote ICT awareness literacy, adult and non-formal education in the country.

#### IV. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that ICT empowers citizens to continuously adapt to community, national and global developmental challenges, as well as to develop the required knowledge, skills associated with life-long learning and community development. This is, therefore, a challenge to literacy, and special education instructors in Nigeria.

There is need for the appropriate integration of ICT in adult education settings to enhance the capacity of both adult educators and adult learners to become more responsive to new challenges in ICT. Integrating ICT in adult education programmes would provide everyone with basic skills and to use such new technologies during development training, workshop, seminars, conference, teaching and learning environment.

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