THE BENEFITS OF USING ICT IN TEACHING ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract

Adult education has been in progress for centuries but needs to be strengthened with information and communication Technology ICT equipment. Adult educators generate meaningful and engaging learning experiences for their learners, strategically using ICT to enhance learning. Integrating ICT equipment in adult education will engender positive development in actualizing societal goals and associating with the terrain of the computer age. This paper dwells on the benefits, problems, challenges and prospects of integrating ICT in adult education. The article also came up with a way forward and concluded. The results showed that the academic staff's level of knowledge of ICT in teaching is moderate and that the uses of ICT for provision of assignments to students via ICT facilities such as Whatsapp platforms, Instagram and Facebook as well as provision of feedback and as answering questions. It was concluded that the greatest barriers to utilization of ICT by academic staff are the cost of facilities, low level of knowledge and academic commitment. It was recommended, among others, that teachers, in general, should be trained and retrained continuously to possess the requisite ICT knowledge to meet current technological trends in society.

Keywords: Adult, Education, Adult Education, Information, Communication Technology

Introduction

Information and communication (ICT) is a broad term. It includes any communication device such as – radio, television, cellular phones, computers and network hardware and software, satellite system, and various associated services, including projectors and video cantering and distance learning. The Economist believes that participation in adult education is an investment in human and capital assets. The investment in adult education is a benefit both to the individual, community and society of large. Adult education programmes would benefit a country like Nigeria with a population of about 140 million over 300 ethnic groups and varied religious affinities. Nigeria still has a high illiteracy rate so no meaningful development can be achieved without their active participation in national development programmes. This can only be achieved if the masses are educated. Adult education is the learning activities that involve adults. These activities are usually planned to achieve spelt-out goals such as developing a specific skill, achieving a particular status, or attaining personal or self-satisfaction by accomplishing a task and maybe knowledge about a specific topic.

Concept of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an extended term for information technology (IT). It stresses the role of unified communications and the integration of telecommunications (wired and wireless signals) computers as well as necessary enterprise software, middleware storage and audio-visual systems, which enable users to access, store,

transmit and manipulate information. Information to be concise is the giving of new knowledge and awareness. At the same time, communication is the passing or sharing of news among individuals or persons.

Though there has not been a generally accepted definition of ICT, this implies various definitions of this concept. But the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2004) stipulates benchmarks for a product to be considered ICT. According to OECD, for a product of a manufacturing or a service industry to be regarded as ICT, it must meet the following criteria:

1. It should fulfil the information processing and communication inducing transmission and display.
2. It should use electronic processing to detect, measure and record physical phenomena or to control a physical process.
3. The components primarily intended for use in such products should also be included.
4. It should enable the function of information processing and communication by electronic means. The service provided must go beyond simply the supply of goods.

The National Policy for Information Technology (2007) sees ICT as computers, ancillary equipment, software and firmware (Hardware) and similar procedures, services (Including support services) and related resources. According to the policy, it "includes any equipment or interconnected system or subsystem of equipment used in the automatic acquisition, storage, manipulation, management, movement, control, display, switching, interchange, transmission or reception of data or information. ICT has assumed a very crucial status globally. This followed its acknowledgement as a vital tool in societal development.

Implementation of ICT in Adult Education

According to (National Policy for Information Technology, 2007), ICT has been generally accepted as an essential tool in the educational process. This usefulness cuts across both formal and non-formal educational systems. ICT is acknowledged for its efficacy in expanding access to education, strengthening the relevance of education to the increasingly digital workplace, and improving the quality of education amongst others, thus bridging the gap between teaching/learning and real-life (Toniomnd)

One very important feature of ICT in adult education is its ability to transcend time and space. Asynchronous learning is learning characterized by a time lag between when the instruction was delivered and when the learners received it – online course materials are accessible to the learners at their convenience, irrespective of location. This feature is also shared by synchronous learning real-time learning events in which all participants are logged on simultaneously and communicate directly. Even though the participants are required to participate simultaneously, they can do so from any part of the world.

Examples of synchronous learning are audio or teleconferencing, video conferencing, chat rooms etc.

Examples of asynchronous tools are – CD-Rom, email, web forum, list serves etc.

Secondly, ICT brings invaluable accessibility to the disposal of the learners and the availability of learning resources from remote locations. These resources can be accessed from any location, at any time, and by any number of persons. It rescued learners from the limited resources available to them in their local library and the stress of having to travel to another library to be able to use the resources available there.

Adult education is one of many professions that can benefit maximally from ICT. The different aspects of ICT, which embrace devices used in telecommunications, computing and broadcasting sectors, are crucial tools that can foster effective adult education programmes, e.g. Television, radio, computer, cellular phones, satellite systems, networks, hardware and software etc.

Thirdly, the internet allows for introducing a new approach to adult education called online learning. This approach involves relying on internet-based took like chats, email discussion groups, etc., to administer adult education programmes without seeing clients physically or one-on-one. The major advantage of this form of adult education is bridging the gap usually created by space. The client can now access professional help from any part of the world without physically seeing or visiting such a part of the world.

Another benefit of online adult education is that it guarantees confidentiality as the clients cherish their anonymity. Wolak Mitchell & Finkelhor (2002) cited in Campbell reported that anonymity makes communication through the internet easier for people who are communicating through the internet easier for people who are shy of meeting someone for help but are eager to get help. Such people are established to be more comfortable discussing issues online that they would not be able to discuss ordinarily.

Information Communication Technology and Adult Education

There has always been a strong relationship between the development of new technologies, major social transformations and changing the definition of what it takes to be a "literate person" – "Adult learner".

Adult education is any education given to adult persons, men and women or what makes it possible for them to learn to read and write. It offers adults denied the facilities of exposure to formal education an opportunity to return and provide for themselves. In the adult education classes, especially at the literacy class level, the adult person is taught the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy. The skill of reading and writing is, therefore, the most basic. It is believed that without literacy, people could not learn the useful information needed for survival and happiness throughout life. This practice is often referred to as training and development.

Adult education is more about promoting changes and assisting the adult population to control change and the environment in which the changes occur. In this respect, there is a need to educate the adult. It enables them to acquire the skills, knowledge and consciousness that will allow them to think more clearly about improving their human relations to facilitate their participation in measures designed to promote their welfare and enhance their personal community growth. As the learners in the post-literacy programmes bring themselves to

classes, there is every tendency that they will exhibit a sense of purpose and commitment to whatever they are being taught. In some of the classes, they are most motivated because they know that they are voluntarily subjecting themselves to the post-literacy programmes; they must have developed a specific need and thirst to be literate. There is every tendency that they will attend to their duty with a meticulous sense of purpose and dedication. As a result, they are bound to learn better and faster probably. Adult learners can use ICT in business transactions and other human endeavours activities

Problems of ICT in Teaching

ICT and adult education can be part of national policies to ensure wider access. However, they should not be seen as universal solutions

Adult educators' attitude plays an important role in the learning process that utilizes computers and internet connections. In short, some adult educators may have positive attitudes to the technology but refrain from using it due to low self-efficacy tendency to consider themselves not qualified to teach with technology.

Adult educators resist and lack interest in using ICT in adult education. Many adult educators may not have the required Information and Technology (IT) skills and feel uncomfortable, nor do they have the training to use the technology in their teaching. And as such would be 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 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 have assistive technology skills to operate successfully in their communities (Nnazor 2015).

On the other hand, the use of ICT in adult education is technology related. The high cost of technology and spare parts, interruptions of internet connections, virus attacks on software and the computer, and poor electricity power supply are serious challenges.

Financing an ICT in adult education programmes requires a large capital investment. For instance, in the rural areas, adult education centres are not equipped with ICT gadgets and tools, computers, internet facilities, assistive technologies like Braille for the virtual improved, or mobile wheelchairs for the disabled adults as a result of the huge capital involved.

Prospect of ICT in teaching Adult Education Students

There is a revolutionary impact on educational methodology with the introduction of information and communication Technology. The Nigerian government, for instance, is aware of the need for ICT development and training to boost manpower and general workforce development to improve the people's well-being and sustain the economy. As a result, many governments and private and non-governmental institutions in Nigeria strive to provide ICT training programmes at all levels, including in work environments (Ibe, 2008).

The Federal Government 2001 approved a national information technology Development Agency (NITDA), which is charged with implementing 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 light of this, the government set up the Nigeria National ICT for Development strategic action plan committee to develop a new ICT policy for development and all education sectors, including the adult education sector.

Suggestions

There is a 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 use of such new technologies during development training workshops, seminars, conferences, and teaching and learning environments.

Adult educators should be trained on using ICT facilities and assistive technology. This will help the individual, adults, and the exceptional. Adults benefit from such training.

There is a need for the government to increase the electricity power supply situation in Nigeria and Delta in particular.

Conclusion

From the preceding, it is evident that ICT empowers citizens to continuously adapt to the community, national and global developmental challenges and develop the required knowledge and skills associated with lifelong learning and community development. In addition, adult learners can use ICT in business transactions and other human activities that require ICT to accomplish and achieve goals.

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