THE USE OF COMPUTER/INTERNET AS A MEDIUM FOR DELIVERING ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA UNIVERSITIES/POLYTECHNICS

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Abstract: The study examined computer network and internet as a means of global communication tool that share a common addressing scheme, unlock the online services, which are centrally controlled. The internet is decentralized by design and can be put to use in the teaching of Adult Education. Findings have shown that: Computer/Internet usage in business, military, banking, communication and even the language arts, etc. have contributed successfully in the actualization of their institutional goals. Since we are in the era of information technology explosion, Computer/Internet has been used in all aspect of man kind.

Keywords: **Computer, Internet, Adult Education, Technology, Machine, Communication, Literacy, Materials, Universities, Polytechnics, Global, Programmes, Net Work, Qualification and Facilitator.**

Introduction
The Internet began in early sixties as a Computer Network for the United State Military and over the time has grown into a global communication tool of many thousands of computers networks that share a common addressing scheme. Unlike online services, which are centrally controlled, the internet is decentralized by design. Each internet computer, called a host is independent. Its operators can choose which internet services to use and which local services to make available to the global internet community.

The use of which the computer/internet can be put in the teaching of Adult Education involves around the idea of communication. The use of computer/internet involves communication between the user and the machine, either by reading or by writing, despite the fact that the computer/internet is incapable of independent thought or action and could, therefore, be described as incapable of communication and to do any thing on its own right, the computer/internet must be programmed, in the same way that a book is a means of communication between the author and the reader, so the computer/internet is a means of communication between the programmer and the user. This basic principle needs to be understood by the computer/internet user in order to utilize fully its potentials.

Computer/Internet have proven to be an effective and reliable tool for the user irrespective of the function it performs and it is due to the continued rising need for

computer/internet usage in virtually all human establishments, computer/internet in Adult Education particularly in the Universities.

Computer/Internet usage in business, military, banking, communication and even the language arts etc. have contributed successfully in the actualization of their institutional goals. Since we are in era of information technology explosion, computer/internet has been used in almost all aspect of mankind.

Definition of Concepts
Evans (1993) defines computers as an electronic device (machine) that is capable of receiving instruction or information (data) process the information, store it and give desired result or output.

Internet: Means international network of communication. It is a global collection of independently operating but inter-connected computer. This massive collection of computer is quite diverse, containing every thing from super computers to the large maintenance of government, business and universities to the small personal computers in individual homes.

On the other hand, internet can be defined as a very large network linking millions of smaller networks; these smaller networks are connected together by telephone lines and cables to form the net or internet. The networks making up the net are linked to very powerful computers called ROUTES, messages sent via the net travel from one router to another router to reach its destination.

Adult Education: According to Umeh (2002) is defined as the education that is both formal and non-formal, which is life long and applies to youths and adults in formal and non-formal environment. Adult education is designed to equip individuals with knowledge and skills that will make them participate actively in the development of themselves and their communities. Therefore, adult education viewed in this context, is a programme that promotes learning and functionality more than mere schooling.

Role of Computer/Internet in Adult Education
It is obvious that the educational progammes carried out in the Department of Adult Education in Nigerian Universities are numerous, such as distance education, extension education, continuing education etc. to achieve the aim of such programmes, several instructional materials and aids are used which to some extent are successful but will not be compared with the computer/internet which if properly implemented and managed will promote adult education programmes to a reasonable level. Also when computers/internets are used in adult education, it will allow for a more interactive learning and most of all promote two-way communication due to the interaction which exists between the adult learners and the machine. To support this Gillespie (1998) maintained that the use of computer/internet and technologies in education, shifted

emphasis in teaching and learning. He further observed that traditionally the emphasis in teaching and learning has been on the instructor as both the subject matter experts and as the primary deliverer of instructions. Computer/internet can also be effectively used in distance education since it is one of he programmes of adult education.

The world is turning into a global village therefore, adult education will be able to realize educational objectives irrespective of time, distance and status, computer/internet will help unite education in general and adult education in particular. It is an effective tool in adult education objective actualization. It will provide computer/internet literacy and social participation for the adults who would have dissociated themselves from places. Computer/internet skill is needed for problem solving.

Computer/internet have been found useful in adult education in many ways and can bring such at tributes as untiring patience, around the clock availability of learning, individuals and students paced instruction. The use of computer/internet has effected changes in the area of teaching, learning and programmes in adult education.

Furthermore, computer/internet will play remarkable role in control in adult education, stands as simulation to teaching and will make efficient planning and decision making in adult education. Also the usefulness of computer/internet in adult is computer/internet assisted instruction.

In planning and decision making in adult education, the computer/internet will play a useful role such as curriculum development in that computer/internet will be used to store information on aptitude, interest and achievement test. When the students enter a school, this information will help in developing two –four years course plan and the number of sections needed to satisfy students' goals. Also, such plans would have a direct bearing on staffing needs on the physical facilities required. It has been observed that such information stored in the computer/internet will be analyzed by the computer and most likely ones are presented and included in the curriculum.

The computer/internet will provide students with around-the-clock, individualized and student paced instruction as earlier mentioned. This will help bridge the gap between students in formal and non-formal, setting, and the absence of constant instructors. This is expressed further in the access to equal educational opportunity via the computer/internet and other computer related technologies.

Prospects of Computer/Internet in Adult Education
The major prospect of computer/internet to adult education lies in the transformation of the relevance of computer/internet in adult education into practice. Furthermore, the rate at which computer/internet is depended on education in general offers greater opportunities and tremendous growth for global, borderless and broader education. The computer/internet will enhance students' performance in areas of difficulty. This

advantage is due to round-the-clock, availability and educational opportunity it provides combined with the opportunity it provides for the student to individual learning. Access to learning is enhance and with the help of computer/internet assisted Instruction, the learners will find it interesting working on the computer/internet without being bored.

Distant education will be effected smoothly and efficiently with the emergences of the computer/internet, since information is an essential basic requirement needed for human growth and adequate functioning, in this era of information technology explosion, the adult learner in the field of adult education needs the knowledge of computer/internet and other related technologies to function appropriately for their personal and societal development. Also, computer/internet in adult education will boost the department's reputation and standard needed to face the educational challenges of our time. Whitesed (1998) observed that the most important merits of computer/internet in education is that it expands choices and advantages of education.

Problems of Computer/Internet Mediated Learning
A lot of problems associated with computer/internet mediated learning are not especially in this part of the country where adult education has been treated in a lip-service. Computer/internet has assumed special importance especially in our efforts to rejuvenate adult education. It also has been discovered that the use of sophisticated innovation technologies such as computer/internet in other parts of the world to enhance adult education, their teachings and practices, and their various activities and programmes have been a welcome innovation.

That not withstanding, various barriers militating against the use of computer/internet are as follows:-
- Lack of adequate computer/internet infrastructure has been noted as a constraint and barrier in the use of computer in adult education. Okpoko (2000) said that "Equity to access to the new technology especially on computer/internet". She said that not all schools or literacy centre can afford to buy computer/internet and even the schools that have these facilities are not able to cater for the needs of the large students' population especially in the developing countries.

- Lack of trained staff and adult education facilitators and instructors in various adult education centres. These adult education facilitators even though may not have the basic skills needed in adult education and yet do not possess the basic functional skills to manipulate the computer/internet let alone imparting knowledge to them. Koehler (1998) emphasized that using computers/internet in education will "dehumanize" instruction and make robots of students. Such problem as interruption in learning process with the computer/internet due to inadequate power supply, inadequate security measures, class room organization and management militates against the effective use of computer/internet for adult education. The use of computer/internets in education has been said not to be

cost effective. This is due to the high cost of computers/internet, and software, and the general maintenance. Okpoko (2000) said that software development and evaluation though still prohibitive in many developing countries because of importation cost, has been a major problem in adult education.

- Finally, the level of awareness on the use of computer/internet technology among facilitators, students of adult education programme and activities could also be militating against the use of computers/internet in the filed of adult education. This point could be taken strictly because some of these adult education facilitators may be based in the rural areas and there is possibility that they may be ignorant or uninformed on the use of the technology in facilitating their activities.

- Low level academic qualification (because some of the facilitators are young school leavers or graduate of a teacher training college). Some may have heard of the computer/internet, but think that it is meant for business centres and establishments. Ignorance in the use of computers/internet among facilitators, teachers and students in adult education must not be overlooked as a major constraint and barrier militating against computer/internet mediated learning in the field and practice of adult education.

Strategies of Using Computers/Internet in Adult Education
The major strategy is taking into consideration the various problems inherent in the programme process and implementation and has pointed them out, developed ways of remedying them. We shall look at some of the strategies of using computers/internets in adult education gradually.

Okpoko (2000) said that in order to prepare computer/internet information in various departments of adult education. There is need for training of facilitators on computer/internet usage through seminars, workshops, symposium etc. she further added that facilitators when trained would help in effective adult education.

Sulla (1999) a distant school net editor reports that Denmark distant learning school network offers more than 2000 private conferences or conferencing which can also be used for supporting or training teachers on-line, example the United Kingdom teacher centre, Germany's Lehrer on-line and Sweden's school net, which privately provides teachers with class room resources and materials as well as providing a forum for teachers to share ideas and exchange information. Rosen (1999) opines that the computer/internet has the capability of enhancing the efficiency of adult education programme especially in the area of the utilization and exchange of reliable data on the growth of adult education. He further stated that this stimulates comparative studies in adult education as it enhances interaction with other countries and enables information to be circulated round the world. It is such information exchange that forms a major component which informs

planners, administrators and academicians in the field about vital variables which lead to the induction of change for better living as well as improvements in organization.

Awoniye (1995) says that this situation reveals the computer/internet as capable of playing important role in adult education and development. This is the area of increased participation in adult education programme, the computer/internet has quickly become an indispensable tool for ensuring the growth of modern adult education. Okpoko (2000) said that any adult education teacher without adequate knowledge of the use of information tool such as computer/internet can not be efficient and also teach effectively in the twenty first century.

There is need to incorporate computer/internet literacy and skill acquisition in adult education and her correspondent activities such as distant education, literacy education, on the job training and in-service training of adult education programme and activities. Adult education centres and institutions with the aid of the government and adult educators must provide and encourage the use of the new innovation in teaching by making sure that such facilities are provided in schools, adult education centres and institutions of higher learning.

Okpoko (2000) said that the government should provide the adult education departments with computers/internet equipment for use in their extra-mural classes to be used by workers of different grades who wish to improve their skills using information through in-service training.

Hopey (1998) says that an investment in information technology is justified for two major reasons, one, "ninety percent of new job require some forms of involvement with information technology and that one of the internet most powerful feature is its ability to bridge the gap between time and distance with e-mail, chat facilities and forum to encourage communication and collaboration between schools across Europe. At this point it is very important to state that all benefits mentioned above can not be achieved without the computer/internet.

It is therefore necessary for department of adult education to secure adequate computers/internets and software, employ and trained facilitators who will be the pioneers of the programme. It is very important to well equip the facilitators as it will be their responsibility to impact knowledge in the students. Adequate security measures need to be put in place. This will determine how safe the computers/internets are and will prevent theft of computers and software.

It should not be a rushed programme to prevent withdrawal attitude by the students and instructors instead, it should take time to implement. When it is implemented over time, it will allow for adequate staff training, adequate computer/internet and general organization and implementation.

There is need for awareness programme on the innovation so as to make the academic community understand and realize the reason it should be embraced. The prospects should be preached in order to encourage participation.

Finally, when all these strategies so far mentioned are implemented and taken at heart the programme is sure to succeed. Pilot experiment and the utilization of computer/internet in adult education could be carried in selected places.

Summary/Conclusion

In the part we once used to have to read through books page by page in order to find specific pieces of information, today we can travel through huge collections of data in seconds, simply by entering a key word in an internet search engine and receive a multitude of results from all over the world.

Adult education centres and institutions with the aid of government, non-governmental organizations and adult educators should help to provide and encourage the use of this new innovation.

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