E-LEARNING IN NIGERIAN EDUCATION: THE PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract
This study examined the concept of e-learning in Nigerian education: prospects and challenges. It defined e-learning as a process whereby the learners and teachers can connect with each other with the use of the computer and internet connectivity to study from the comfort of their homes in different locations without being physically present. However, the study identified that savings of transportation cost, helping students to do independent research and individualize learning, and others as the prospect of e-learning. Whereas poor electricity power supply, poor network connectivity, poverty, lack infrastructural facilities in the schools as the challenges and hindrances of e-learning in Nigeria education. Finally, the paper concludes by making suggestions as the way forward. For electronic learning to drive in Nigeria, the government should improve the power sector, for the learners will need not to spend too much money in the purchase of fusel fuel to generate power for themselves before the can charge their e-learning tools. The government should make digital electronic tools for learning available in the Nigerian schools for the learners and students, for it will improve their academic performance.

Key words: E-learning, Education, Prospects and Challenges

Introduction

E-learning in Nigeria is gaining momentum as it is gaining widespread use in the Nigeria educational system. This paper exposes readers and awake the curiosity of the members of public, stakeholders of education which includes: learners, teachers, government and others relevant agencies' on the realities of e-learning in Nigerian education. E-learning has the potential to change the face of learning in ways that are so friendly so much that the old traditional ways of teaching and learning may become outdated and obsolete in real actual sense and no longer be relevant under the present circumstances in this stream of times. Undisputedly one obvious truth that cannot be denied is that e- learning has triggered tremendous change in the world of education that events cannot return to their formal status any longer before the introduction of electronics digital devices in the teaching and learning process. However, interestingly it cannot be out of place to observe

that e-learning on a brighter note presents huge prospects on one hand and challenges on the other. In a nutshell, this study has gone a long way in bringing to limelight on how government and other stakeholders in education can help to improve the administration of quality education with the use of e-learning tools in Nigeria. Finally, this paper give opportunity for all to embrace the realities of the use of electronics in learning in education as the hope of our school children and humanity in general in this digital era for relevance of the 21st century Nigeria. Therefore, what is e-learning? It will enrich our knowledge to define and explain the key term associated with this paper.

E-Learning Conceptualization

What really is E-Learning? The use of electronic devices in the teaching and learning process can be regarded as e-learning. It involves the use of computer, Android, tablets, laptops, internet connectivity etc. It is a process whereby the learners and teachers can connect with each other with the use of computer and the internet connectivity and study from the comfort of their homes without being physically present. The concept of E-learning has been subjected to different interpretations by scholars in various disciplines. Let us consider some.

> *E-Learning means electronic learning. It is mainly computer network enabled transfer of skills and knowledge. E-Learning is teaching and learning that is delivered, supported, and enhanced through the use of digital technologies and media. The applications and processes of e-learning include web-based learning, computer based learning, virtual education opportunities and digital collaboration (Okanezi & Amadi, 2021, p. 5).*

Ari, Egaga and Jimba (2021, p. 162, as cited cited in Mbato, 2023), observe:

> *Online education is defined as the use of mobile technology with information and communication technology (ICT), to enable learning anytime and anywhere. Online education is a form of education where students use their home computers through the internet*‖.

In a similar perspectives, Nwokugha and Keri-Frank (2023, p. 86) cited in Mbato (2023) conceived that:

> *Online teaching and learning is that all such attempts invoke meanings that revolve around teaching and learning through the use of devices that are technology driven and connected to the internet and this connection to the internet makes teaching and learning available to learners anywhere, anytime irrespective of distance, location or environment.*

In simple straight forward language, e-learning is defined as the use of electronics devices in the teaching and learning process, such as laptop, computer, android phones, etc. within and outside classroom. In other words any education be it in the form of training or apprentiship with the use of the internet and personal computer and Android etc. from the comfort of the learner is online learning.

In affirmative to the above, Markus (2008) in Nwokoro (2017) argued that:

> *E-learning is a learning process created by interaction with digitally delivered content, network-based services and tutoring support. E-learning is any technologically meditated learning using computers whether from a distance or in face to face classroom setting (computer assisted learning), it is a shift from traditional education or training to ICT-based personalized, flexible, individual, self-organized, collaborative learning based on a community of learners and teachers. Currently some social media such as Wiggio, blogs, wikis, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, YouTube and many others are now used for various purposes, therefore such tools are also used by teachers to serve as a platform for teacher-student and student communication within and without the classroom. Markus (2008, as cited in Nwokoro, 2017).*

Furthermore, Okanezi and Iyalagha (2021) said it all when they write:

> *It is a system of learning where electronic media is used, typically over the internet. In other words, e-learning could be referred to as a learning process which utilizes electronic teaching technologies to access and deliver educational information based on a given curriculum. E-Learning is mainly computer network enabled transfer of skills and knowledge which can be operated in a classroom, seminar, conference as well as distance learning programme. In an education setting, e-learning is used for facilitation, instruction, course delivery and interaction.*

In the light of the above, Abdulrahman (2022, p. 37, as cited in Mbato, 2023), affirm to the later when he write:

> *Various means, mostly electronic; used for teaching and learning. In other words, these are recognized as e-teaching and e-learning, but more advanced in the technology is the one involving audio-visual tools like Zoom and Google Meet, Connectals, Yahoo group, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams Skype,Wassap, Telegram etc.*

Lending voice on this, Body (2005, as cited in Nwaneri & Ikwegbu, 2017, p. 270) state:

> *E-learning is education given to people using electronic delivery methods such as video conferencing, email CD Rom, etc It covers a lot of computer based learning which includes delivering of subject matter through the internet, satellites.*

E-Learning Tools in Teaching and Learning in education

E-learning tools in teaching and learning include the followings: Video conferencing, Computers, Teleconferencing, Android, Projector, Tablets, Electronic White board, Internet, Mobile Applications, Modem, Email , CD Rom, Virtual Classroom, etc. Let us briefly examine some of these tools;

Computers: These involve electronic machines that are capable of receiving, storing, and retrieving data. Agbo (2001) assert that the computer is an electronic device that has a semiconductor chip called a microprocessor. The chip contains all the arithmetic, logic and control circuitry that enables the computer to carry out its numerous functions ranging from the simple to the most complex. It is the best educational technology medium for individual and institution, (Nwaneri & Ikwegbu, 2017, p. 271).

Modem: This means modulator-demodulator. It is a device that converts analogue signal to digital and vice versa. It came into being as a result of the advent of microcomputers which has advanced the dissolution of the boundary between computing and communications, (Okanezi and Amadi, 2021, p. 14).

Electronic White board: Unlike the analogue white chalk black board or the white marker board, which we use marker pencil to write directly with hand held duster, the interactive white board is computer based. In words of Nwaneri & Ikwegbu (2017), this is a device connected to the computer that helps the computer save anything written on it and since things can also be printed if so desired, it uses data projector, electronic pen and erasers. The electronic white board is notably a very good medium of effective classroom interaction and other activities like workshop, seminars and training of staff, (p. 271).

Prospects of E-Learning Tools in Teaching and Learning in education

1) **It saves transportation cost:** This is possible due to fact that teachers and learners can study from any location of their choice without necessarily coming to the formal class room, thereby saving transportation cost.
2) **It helps students to do independent research and individualize learning:** with the introduction of personal computer, students can do independent research at their comfort without going physically to the physical library building.
3) **It improves the quality of learning of every students:** it gives students the liberty to study according to their place.

4) **It makes students to learn how to make use of ICT tools:** students have been exposed: to e-library with the use of electronic learning
5) **It saves time:** Times spent in traveling to and fro the physical location of the school is saved and minimized
6) **It encourages collaborative learning:** students can collaborate with their fellow through the use of the online resources
7) **It affords opportunity to the infirm to receive education wherever they found:** the infirm and timid students can express themselves online freely
8) **Online teaching and learning support and promote the teaching and learning activities of teachers and students outside the school environment:** The fact that e-learning involves the use of electronic digital devices for learning**.**

Nwokugha and Keri-Frank (2023) observe:

> *Online teaching and learning support and promote the teaching and learning activities of teachers and learners who are shy and are easily intimidated. It is also good and helpful for slow learners and learners who find it difficult to express their feelings in the conventional face to face mode of lesson delivery in the classrooms (p. 89).*

Due to the fact that online learning is learner‘s centered makes it possible for students to study according to their pace. Additionally, Nwokugha and Keri (2023) expanciated on this and specifically added that:

> *Online learning offers learners opportunities to take repositioned for what they learn, take responsibility in determining what they need to learn, determine the pace to learn as well as take responsibility in predicting what actions to take to guarantee successful actions (p. 88).*

We all want to use E-learning resources in our teaching and learning process, but while doing so we may face some challenges.

Challenges of E-learning in teaching and learning in Education

One of the major challenges of online teaching and learning process is that it is selective in terms of disciplines. What do we mean here? By this means we mean that there are some discipline that cannot be taught through online teaching and learning, irrespective of the amount of highly digitalized technology adopted for the study. In other words, it is not inclusive. To make this point more explicit, Nwaokugha (2022) write:

> *Online teaching and learning is selective in terms of discipline and courses that can be taught to learners through the platform. In other*

> *words, online teaching and learning is not comprehensive and inclusive in terms of accommodating all courses and disciplines. The point being emphasized here is that whereas online teaching and learning can be effective and productive in humanities and social sciences; it cannot be effective and productive in disciplines and courses such as pharmacy, agricultural science, sciences, engineering and medical science where practical demonstrations are fundamental requirements. What this exposes or points to is that equality of access or educational opportunity will remain a mirage or a dream in a region of online teaching and learning, as learners will be forced to take up courses and disciplines, based on what can be offered on the online platform (p. 92)*

Other challenges of e-learning include the following: poor electricity, power supply, poor Network connectivity, poverty, cost effective, lack infrastructural facilities, etc. Let us briefly examine these challenges;

Poor electricity power supply: The cost of running and powering the electronic gadgets for studies is cost effective as the energy power suppliers are not proactive.

Poor Network connectivity: Generally, strong and adequate network to connect to the internet during study time most times are not available as some learners and teachers suffer some setback as a result.

Poverty: Many Nigerian are poor and are living in abject poverty and cannot provide for themselves good nutritional value meals let alone electronic gadgets for learning

Cost effective: The cost of modern technological devices are very dare to afford by learner as their parents and guidance cannot afford to buy the latest version and smart devices for their wards. As a result of this obvious reason most times our learners go for obsolete and outdated equipment for learning

Lack infrastructural facilities: The government has failed to adequately provide and equip the schools with ICT facilities.

It might be on the basis of the above observation that Ari, Moses and Jimba (2021) reacted thus:

> *For online education to survive in Nigeria government must play a vital role to improve the challenges of providing basic online infrastructural facilities. For effective online education program in Nigeria the following challenges; inadequate electric power supply, poor network service from network providers, high cost of airtime, and lack of sufficient funds to purchase a laptop and an android phones, and Universities must be ICT complaint; with digitally literate students and lecturers before online education may be possible (p. 162).*

The challenge of the absence of face-to-face interactions, is worthy of note as some learners can only learn better when they are physically present with the teacher and other learners as well than when they are separated altogether by distance. There are some students with special needs and abilities that can only learn better under the guidance of the teacher who must be physically present to attend to their needs.
Furthermore, the challenges of online learning in teaching and learning is as follows:

> *Similar to any other country, a major challenge of online teaching and learning that also applies to Nigeria is the complete absence of interaction between the teacher and learners and between the learners and learners in the school community and in the teaching learning process. In other words, the relationship or interactions among learners and learners and among learners and teachers with their positive influences in charging or motivating learners to learn is completely absent. Put slightly different, it is self-evident that the receptivity of an individual learner or group of learners to teaching and learning has potentials to trigger and produce some motivational effects in the attitude of fellow learners towards teaching and learning. The ability to explore this all important variables from fellow learners and the teaching learning environment does not exist in online teaching and learning. Face-to-face traditional teaching and learning method is inclusive so much that simple and ordinary eye contact between a teaching and a learner or simply body language of a teacher can robustly and positively perform wonders in directing and redirecting the attention of learners. This vital pedagogical resource is terribly absent in an online teaching learning process (Nwaokugha, 2022, p. 90).*

Conclusion

This paper has examined the concept of e-learning in Nigerian education: challenges and prospects. It defined e-learning as a process whereby the learners and teachers can connect with each other with the use of the internet and study from the comfort of their homes without being physically present. It identified savings of transportation cost, helping students to do independent research and individualize learning, improving the quality of learning of every students, making students to learn how to make use of ICT tools, saving of time, collaborative learning, providing opportunity to the infirm to receive education wherever they found, supporting and promoting the teaching and learning activities of teachers and students outside the school environment, as the prospect of e-learning. While on the other hand poor electricity power supply, poor network connectivity, poverty, cost effective, lack infrastructural facilities as the

challenges. Finally, for electronic learning to thrive in Nigeria, the government should improve the power sector. Let there be constant electricity power supply for the learners. If this is done the learners will need not to spend too much money in the purchase of petroleum products to generate power for themselves before the can charge the learning tools. Lastly, the government should make digital electronic tools for learning available in the Nigerian schools for the learners, for it will improve the academic performance of the learners.

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