

## **Challenges and Prospects of Integrating Information and Communication Technology in Adult Education in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

**A**dult education is indispensable tool for illiterate adult populace to fit into the modern society. It offers the adult members of the society opportunities to acquire skills, knowledge, competencies, attitudes, values etc. Adult education requires Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to be strengthened. Inspiring adult education using information technology equipment touches all aspects of human lives in this information age. This helps in increasing the individuals' ability to manage affairs, and resources both human and material things. The researcher gathered data from secondary sources e.g., Nigeria National policy on education editorial, public reports, journals, published and un-published books, and other relevance documents using qualitative analysis for achieving the aim of the paper. The paper contains; concept of ICT and ICT integration in adult education, importance and challenges of ICT in adult education, problems and prospects of integrating ICT in adult education as well ways forward. The researcher concluded that the integration of ICT in adult education will engender positive development in actualizing societal goals and associating with the terrain of computer age.

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

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## **Background to the Study**

Adult as many people especially those outside the field of adult education say, 'is a person who is old enough to maintain a family'. Ojo (2011) opined that it is a stage of life where test of maturity and responsibility is ascertained. Being found to be matured and responsible, an adult is required to display inherent qualities before he/she can be referred to as an adult. Therefore, what is adult education?

According to UNESCO Institute for Statistic (2011) defined adult education as education specifically targeting individuals who are regarded as adults by the society to which they belong to improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose to complete a level of formal education, or to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies in a new field or to refresh or update their knowledge in a particular field. This also includes 'Non-formal Education', Continuing Education', Recurrent Education' or 'Second Chance Education'. To strive better in adult education, ICT integration is essential.

## **ICT Integration in Adult Education**

There has always been strong relationship between the development of new technology, major social transformations, and changing definitions of what it takes to be a literate person. UNESCO (2006) defined ICT as a form of technology that are used to transmit, store, create, share or exchange information. On the other hand, ICT integration in adult education is the use of ICT to introduce, reinforce, supplement and extend skills in adult education Centre (Pisapia, 2014). Based on the pivotal role of ICT in adult education, the Federal Republic of Nigeria in her National Policy on Education stated that:

*In recognition of the prominent role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in advancing knowledge and skills necessary for effective functioning in the modern world there is urgent need to include Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at all levels of education in Nigeria” (Federal Republic of Nigeria (National Policy on Education), 2004, section 4, No. 19 (m), p. 17). Likewise, the same policy stated that “Local Government Councils shall be responsible for provision of physical facilities for rural libraries, reading rooms, television viewing centers and radio listener's clubs in Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education” (National Policy on Education, 2004, Section 6, No. 38 C (v), p. 28). Also, the Federal Ministry of Education in her national guidelines to implement ICT in education declared to “promote ICT proficiency in mass and non-formal education with focus on children, women and people with special needs” (Federal Ministry of Education (National Implementation Guidelines for ICT in Education), 2019, Section 2.2.5, p. 11). Serial No. 5 of the same section of the guidelines, mandated to “establish ICT clubs as a co-curricular activity in Non-formal Education Centre (Federal Ministry of Education (National Implementation Guidelines for ICT in Education), 2019, Section 2.2.5, No. 5, p. 12).*

For the forgoing, both the 'Federal Ministry of Education' and the 'National Policy on Education' recognized the important of ICT in adult education.

### **Importance of ICT in Adult Education in Nigeria**

According to Kozma (as cited in Igwe, Oyiboka, and Johnson, 2016) pinpoint some importance of ICT in adult/non-formal education. Among others, are:

1. ICT helps to produce ICT literate adults who will be useful to themselves and the society.
2. ICT provides adult learners the opportunity for distance learning nation-wide.
3. ICT provides adult educators with new sources of information and knowledge.
4. ICT encourages self-directed learning because adults love to engage in personal learning.
5. ICT produces adults who are capable of working in the new societies arising from ICT.
6. ICT in adult education add to community empowerment.

### **Problems with Adults using ICT in Adult Education**

1. The fear of using ICT technology.
2. Physical challenges like limited vision, impaired hearing, issues with motor skills, etc.
3. Diminished working memory.
4. Difficulty in staying focus.
5. Misuse of the technology for leisure.

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

Most adult education programmes require the use of ICT from the stage of program development to program evaluation. It is established that factors affecting ICT integration in adult education in one country may therefore not be applicable to another country (Anadarajan, Igbaria, and Anakwe, 2002). Therefore, to establish the existing challenges of integrating ICT in adult education considering Nigeria will be regarded to policy level and planning, infrastructure, communication barrier, capacity building, financing, among others (Fasakun (as cited in Igwe, Oyiboka, and Johnson, 2016)).

1. **Policy level and longtime planning:** Policy planners always have challenges of stakeholders' identification and harmonization of efforts across different interest groups. The piloting of the chosen ICT-based model and specification of the existing sources of financing always and do take a long period of time.
2. **Failure of policy implementation:** 'Easy said than done'. Nice and appropriate policy might be made available but putting it to action is a bone in the throat. Bardach (2017) in his studies, observed that diversion of resources, deflection of policy goals, dilemmas of administration and dissipation of energies added to the failure of policy implementation in adult education.
3. **Lack of infrastructures:** The absence of appropriate buildings and rooms to house ICT technologies, irregular power supply and Continuous disruptions in network services are things of the day in adult education Centre. Nzeneri (2008) noted that adequate facilities have not been provided in adult education centers despite the efforts of government, individuals, governmental and non-governmental agencies and communities.

4. **Instructors' poor capacity building:** Adult education is facing the challenges of severe shortage of ICT skills and personnel, obsolete curriculum, poor attitude and perception of teachers and administrators in ICT (Federal Ministry of Education, 2019). Most instructors lack professional training for them to be ICT skilled and computer literate. In fact, skill gap of the people implementing ICT is one of the key impeding challenges of ICT integration in adult education (Nnazor, 2005).
5. **Communication barrier:** Another challenge of integrating ICT in adult education is the inability of ICT systems to support instructions in multiple languages. One of the critics on media works was on its lack of ability to support multiple languages. Adults learn better when learning materials are presented in their respective languages (Wagner and Kozma, 2003). Hendro, Zaim, Syahrul, and Augustina (2018) also stated that potential barriers that might be face by adult learners using ICT in adult education is lack of English proficiency.
6. **Learners' low self-efficacy:** Self-efficacy is the extent or strength of one's belief in one's ability to complete tasks and reach goals (Ormrord, 2006). Most adult learners do not have positive attitude toward ICT. They lack enthusiasm. This could be as a result of religious belief, fear of loosen their customs and traditions, or the wrong impression “dry pot cannot be reshaped”. Which means old people cannot learn new things.
7. **Low financial budget:** ICT in adult education requires large capital investment. The cost of purchasing, installing, and maintaining ICT gargets are the great weakness to ICT integration in adult education. Most adult education Centre are ill-equipped with ICT gadgets and assistive technologies for the disabilities due to huge capital involvement.
8. **Accessibility challenge:** Adult education Centre with ICT equipped are mostly found in urban places. There is almost none existing in the rural areas chiefly because most rural places were located in area with bad terrains. Vehicles cannot access or convey ICT tools, coupled with no electricity. Therefore, integrating ICT in adult education in such places is like a blind man lacing a needle.
9. **Maintenance:** Maintaining ICT tools is another challenge of ICT integration in adult education in most countries especially in Africa. Poor maintenance culture is known with underdeveloped and developing countries. These countries can budget for ICT implementation but not its maintenance. Some adults' attitudes toward the use of ICT tools are equally problematic to their maintenance.

### **Prospects of ICT Integration in Adult Education**

For ICT to be successfully integrated in adult education, the following prospects must not be deviated:

1. ICT-enhanced adult education requires clearly stated objectives for mobilization of resources and political commitment of the concerned bodies (Igbo, 2008). The call for ICT policies in Nigeria is to allow individual citizens, including adults to access the training and services connected to ICT. In the light of this, the government set up the 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.

2. Nigerian government is aware of the need for ICT development and training to boost the manpower, improve the people's wellbeing and sustain the economy. As a result, many governmental and non-governmental bodies in Nigeria should strive to assist in the provision of ICT infrastructures and training programmes at all levels including work environments (Ibe, 2008).
3. Adult educators are now benefiting from workshops and professional development programmes focused on the use of computers and ICT in teaching and learning. This is in line with Bauer and Kenton (2005) who opined that teachers receive ICT instructions, schools now integrate computers and ICT into the curriculum, provide hardware and software needed for teaching ICT, computers and ICT become essential components of teacher preparation programs. Another restructuring measure for capacity building is the intention of improving ICT competencies, professional development of teachers and develop contents based on approved curricula. (Federal Ministry of Education, 2019).
4. Federal Ministry of Education (2019) shall organize appropriate manpower development on ICT content in indigenous languages to promote ICT proficiency in mass and non-formal education. Provision of multimedia classrooms such as e-classroom, virtual classroom through the use of teleconferencing studio, radio, television in which learners' languages will be used to impact lesions.
5. Creating awareness through mass and local media including social media the important of ICT in adult life will encourage self-esteem. Also, offering sponsorship to people with special needs and the under-served ones on ICT will equally bring in people to the system. This is in-line with Nnazor (2005) who stated that people with disabilities should be equipped with assistive technology skills to be fit in their communities.
6. ICT funding in adult education should be increase by engaging the existing funding channels (NITDF, PTDF, CBN, NITDA, etc.) and such funds should be use appropriately. Also, the use of creative financing models by identifying and establishing collaboration with development partners and seeking intervention for the funding of ICT in adult education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2019).
7. Although, ICT is having a revolutionary impact on educational methodology globally, but this revolutionary trend is not widespread and needs to be strengthened to reach a large percentage of the population (Dabesaki, 2005). Kinuttia (2008) stressed that adult education programmes have usually been carried out via radio, television and instructor-led lessons, but more recently some organizations have incorporated newer technologies. He pointed out that adult education programmes are now delivered through Community Multi-media Centre (CMCs).
8. Appropriate use of computers and other ICT gargets by instructors and adult learners has great significant effect on the life span of these gargets. Adult learners should be properly oriented about the do and don't when using the ICT gargets and equally guided to avoid ill use. Federal Ministry of Education (2019) stated that it shall adopt strategies for technical support and maintenance of ICT in adult education.

### **Ways Forward**

1. ICT policies in education should be properly enforced by the government through her agencies like NITDA, NCC, etc., with more focus on adult education.
2. The federal government in collaboration with state, local government and NGOs should emphasized, fully recognized and provide physical structures, facilities and ICT resource materials readily available as well encouraged to finance ICT in adult education.
3. Professional ICT educators should be developed and deployed to all adult education Centre. Regular monitoring and evaluation should also be carrying out to restructure ICT capacity building in adult education.
4. Adult education instructors and learners should be provided with Language Translation Devices like Langogo Pocket AI, Zoto Smart, Tarvis Touch Go, etc. These devices support multiple languages. Microsoft team and Microsoft translator are also good for multilingual conference and teachers/students' communication translation (Microsoft, 2020).
5. Careful labor market and cost benefit analysis should be taken. These in some cases might reveal other proven technologies that might provide necessary textbooks, peer tutoring, training, supervision and quality teachers in adult education.
6. Concessional employment should also be given to ICT professionals among the adults to attract people especially the under-served ones into ICT profession.
7. Government should sign, support and maintain agreement with vendors for regular training, maintenance and support staffs as well budget for ICT maintenance.

### **Conclusion**

It is crystal clear that ICT empowers adult citizens to continuously adapt to community, national and global developmental challenges, as well to develop the required knowledge, skills associated with life-long learning. There is need for 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 developmental training, workshops, seminars, conferences, teaching and learning environments.

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