

**RELEVANCE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF PRIMARY
SCHOOLS IN THE RURAL AREA IN NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

The administration of primary school in Nigeria has not been effective due to the problems confronting them such as the poor state of the facilities especially in the rural areas. The paper tries to look at the application of information and communication Technology as a means in enhancing and improving the administrative skills needed for effective and efficient administration of the primary school in the rural areas. The administration of ICT in the management of primary schools has its own challenges such as poor funding, lack of power supply and inadequate skilled manpower to operate and maintain ICT gadgets. The paper thus recommended that adequate funding should be released to purchase and maintain these facilities as this will help to enhance the administrative competencies of the school administrators.

Education is very important to the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria. This is the reason developed countries appropriate sizeable proportion of their Gross National income to the development of their Education sector. Today, education is universally accepted as a form of investment in human being which yields economic benefit and contributes to a nation's development by increasing the producing and consumptive capacity of its citizens (Agbunno and Ochueme 2007). There is no gain saying that education makes life more meaningful because it equips the individual with

relevant skills and potentials that will enable him cope with the challenges of the society and contribute his own quota in the development of the society in which he finds himself.

The foundation of the education begins with primary school which according to the National policy on Education (2004) is the education given to children from the ages of six to eleven years plus (6-11 years) it is obvious that primary education is the bedrock of the nations educational system since it determines the quantity and quality of subsequent education. Therefore anything that is being done at the primary school level should be done with all sense of dedication and seriousness. According to Maduewesi (2005), primary education is the gateway to whatever an individual can achieve through education.

And for an individual to have a solid secondary and tertiary education, solid primary education is inevitable. It is at this backdrop that information and communication technology is needed in the administration of primary schools for effective teaching / learning to take place to lay the solid foundation for both the primary and other levels of the nations educational system.

The Concept of Information and Communication Technology

The rapid growth in information and communication Technology has actually brought a lot of innovation in the way things are done including in teaching and learning. If people can now have electronic commerce, on-line banking, electronic library, electronic learning and so on, then the emergence of information and communication technology is a breakthrough in teaching, learning and the administration of schools.

Ezekocha,(2008) sees information and communication technology as the collection, storage, procession, dissemination and use of the information. Again he stated that it also includes telecommunication services used together with computer hardware and software for a range of services including internet.

According to Ofodu in Efedu and Moeneke(2010), information and communication Technology (ICT) is an electronic or computerized device assisted by human and interactive materials that can be used for a wide range of teaching and learning as well as personal use. Information and communication technology has helped in the dissemination of information far and wide which has resulted to information explosion and acquisition of knowledge faster and with ease. This knowledge explosion has enhanced teaching and learning in the education sector, and the primary education cannot be an exemption. Achuonye and Nwiyi (2010) defined information and communication technology as all embracing, a comprehensive application of modern communication gadgets for processing, storing, retrieving and sending information of all kinds in whatever form and distance. It is a very fast and accurate means of accessing or receiving, storing, transferring, processing and sending ideas, perception or information.

The administration of primary schools in the rural areas could be enhanced by the use of information and communication technology (ICT) gadget in the day-to-day administration of the schools.

Managerial Functions of School Heads/Importance of ICT

The school administrators are those who occupy the high administrative position in any given school. In the primary school which is the focus of the study, the administrator performs functions such as policy implementation and programme planning, human resource management, pupils personal management, school plant management and school finance management (Nwiyi, Fiokedu & Daminabo, 2003), Hill & McShane (2008) in their own view identified the following functions of the school managers to include interpersonal roles, information roles, decision roles and managerial roles. However, the study is anchored on the relevance of the use of ICT in carrying out these functions in the school system for effective administration of the primary schools in Nigeria.

There are lots of benefits accruable to the effective use of information and communication technology in the administration of primary schools in Nigeria.

➤ **Administrative Efficiency:** One major setback in achieving the educational objective of the primary education is inefficiency of the school administrators in keeping some records. Head teachers are not good in keeping records, but with the introduction of information and communication technologies such as computers, digital libraries, e-mail, internet and so on where information are stored and disseminated, they can do better in keeping records, and become effective in performing their prescribed roles as administrator, (Achuonye and Nwiyi, 2010).

➤ **Availability and Easy retrieval of information:** It will help to maintain adequate and accurate records; according to Achuonye and Nwiyi (2010), it also leads to easy accessibility and dissemination of information on school records which are necessary for national planning, financial budgeting and effective implementation of the educational programmes and policies.

➤ **Development and promotion of effective use of innovative materials in primary school administration:** The use of computer and internet will enhance the effectiveness of the school heads, new skills and knowledge in school administration will be acquired by the school administrator, which will enhance his performance and at his own convenience.

➤ **It enhances effective teaching and learning:** Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provides multimedia for fostering effective learning, because it has rich store of content that can be accessed by learning (Hassan and Yusuf, 2012), while Verma (2011) on his own opinion stated that, the use of ICT facilities enhance learning level that is not limited by space and time and through ICT, distance learning is made possible. A learner can attain educational knowledge that is not restricted to certain location and within a particular period unlike the conventional classroom. The

administration of primary school becomes easy when all the teachers and the learners are well exposed to the use of ICT in teaching and learning.

➤ **Effective Monitoring of the School System:** The administrators monitor the performance of the different units within the school system. Assessing for example, how well the windows, office and box business are performing against target. According to Mintzerg (2001), managers rely on both formal and informal channels to collect the information required for effective monitoring. Formal channels include the organizations own internal accounting information systems and data provided by important external agencies eg. Ministry of Education, School board, and internet managers. It is therefore important for the School head to effectively utilize the ICT for the administration of the school and the achievement of the goals of primary education.

Challenges of the use of Information and Communication Technology in the Administration of Primary Schools.

➤ **Poor state of school buildings:** some of our primary schools are in a dilapidated shape. The conditions of some of the buildings especially in the rural areas epitomize the state of rot. The facilities are decayed and deplorable and in most cases hazardous and injurious to both the children and the teachers. These types of buildings cannot accommodate the information and communication technology gadgets needed by the school heads for the effective administration of the schools.

➤ **Inadequate skilled manpower:** The business world is undergoing changes due to technological innovations, and the world of work has become a complex and massive matrix of vocations. Globalization, competition, structural changes in economics, new forms of work organization and many other social and economic factors are creating a new content for school administrators, yet there is still acute shortage of trained school administrators that will use this soft ware, and operate the network system for effective and efficient administration of primary schools. The primary schools do not also have the technicians who will repair and maintain the ICT facilities and its accessories when they breakdown. This situation poses a problem to the use of ICT in school administration.

➤ **Poor planning:** Nigeria most often make the educational plans without proper foundational plan and feasibility study about the finance, legibility, adequacy and readiness of personnel that will be involved in the interpretation and implementation of curriculum (Efed and Moemeke, 2010). This situation results to unavailability of the ITC facilities in most primary schools in Nigeria especially in the rural areas. Even when they are available, the primary school heads are not computer literate and as such cannot operate the system or make use of them as to be effective and efficient in performing their prescribed roles as the school heads. This is a major setback in this knowledge explosion and globalization economy.

➤ **Lack of power supply:** According to Achuonye and Nwiyi (2010), some schools in the rural areas are not connected to the National grid. Information and

communication technology gadgets need electricity to function, but these schools are not yet electrified and the application of these facilities in the administration of these primary schools are hampered. No wonder Efed and Moemeke (2010) lamented on the unfortunate state of the country's power holding company in charge of providing stable light to the citizens. According to them Nigerian government has a serious problem in the provision of stable and reliable electric power supply to the nooks and cranny of the country. The epileptic nature of the light and its fluctuation voltage has damaged even the ICT equipment installed in the few primary schools.

➤ **Poor funding:** The current state of the nation's economy has posed a serious problem for the purchase of these ICT gadgets in the schools, and funding of the educational sector in Nigeria has remained poor and are not commensurate with the modern trend of knowledge explosion and technological advancement with the rising cost of computer hardware, software and their accessories and that is why most primary schools especially in rural areas cannot have access to using them for day to day administration hence becoming a setback to realizing the aims of primary education in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The management of human resources is the most difficult thing an administrator will face in any organization. Therefore it beholds on the administrator to be well trained, knowledgeable, skillful in managing the people in the organization for effective and efficient output, and the education industry is no exemption. The primary school heads should be trained, on how to operate the ICT gadgets provided in the school for effective and efficient administration of primary schools in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made.

- (1) The government should provide ICT facilities in primary schools in the rural areas.
- (2) The government as a matter of urgency should connect all communities to the national grid for effective utilization of electricity in the schools.
- (3) There should periodic be ICT training for all school heads to improve their administrative skills in the management of the schools.
- (4) The federal, state, local government and all stake holders should pay adequate attention to the funding of the education sector so that the benefits of ICT in national development will be achieved in Nigeria.
- (5) There should be urgent renovation of the primary schools in the rural areas, as teachers, head teachers and pupils go to School with fear of the building collapsing on them.

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