

# THE ROLE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN ENHANCING THE CAPABILITIES OF ADULT LEARNERS IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

The main purpose of information and communication technology (ICT) is basically to enhance people's capabilities in various areas of human endeavour in the contemporary society. Indeed, information and communication technology (ICT) has widened people's access to relevant information in the contemporary global environment. The opportunity of having widened access to relevant information, undoubtedly, stimulates the enthusiasm and interest of adult learners in adult and non-formal education setting in the society. This obviously enables people to promote effective service delivery in their various areas of human endeavour in Nigeria. It is widely known today that knowledge is power. Consequently, the possession of the relevant knowledge certainly places a person in a better position to compete favourably with other contenders in a highly competitive global work environment today. The main focus of this paper is on the need for information and communication technology (ICT) in enhancing the capabilities of adult learners in adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. Part of the conclusion is that currently the challenge is on the urgent need to focus on exploring the possibilities to stimulate an effective and efficient application of information and communication technology (ICT) in order to meet the urgent demands of education in Nigeria as a developing economy. In consideration of the discussions, it was recommended among other things that there is still a need for people to understand clearly that the application of information and communication technology (ICT) in the right environment helps tremendously to stimulate an efficient educational system in Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

Information and communication technology (ICT) has important functions of communicating information, knowledge, research findings, advertisement, public enlightenment among other things to the masses in the society. While commenting on mass media as a component of information and communication technology (ICT), Nzeneri (2002) identified some of the functions of mass media to include disseminating information, research findings, entertainment and advertisement among other things to people in the society. Essentially, the end product of mass media is the person who receives the information and decodes it appropriately for the benefit of the individual concerned and the society at large.

It is pertinent to note that information and communication technology (ICT) has the capacity to store information, process information and display information where, when and as desired by the adult learners or the users irrespective of age. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is usually at the convenient of the users.

Fundamentally, in the field of education, information and communication technology (ICT) has important roles to play in order to stimulate effective teaching and learning in the society. This undoubtedly, promotes effective service delivery in educational sector of the economy.

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Indeed, functional information and communication technology (ICT) in any economy requires a strong workforce with relevant knowledge and skills that will meet the challenges of the contemporary global environment. Ndukwe (2006) identified lack of workforce with relevant skills to meet the challenges of information and communication technology (ICT) industry as a serious factor that confronts the sector in Nigeria. The challenge of providing the required relevant knowledge and skills in information and communication technology (ICT) industry should be properly addressed in Nigeria. Adult and non-formal education intervention programmes can certainly be used to address adequately this problem of poor workforce on short-term and long-term basis in information and communication technology (ICT) industry in Nigeria.

### **The Need for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Enhancing the Capabilities of Adult Learners in Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria**

The need for an efficient information and communication technology (ICT) in enhancing the capabilities of adult learner in adult and non-formal education in Nigeria can be seen in the following:

1. **The Need to Create Enabling Environment for Efficient Information and Education Technology (ICT) in Enhancing the Capabilities of Adult Learners in Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria.**

The obvious need to create enabling environment to stimulate efficient information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting the capabilities of adult learners in adult and non-formal education in Nigeria cannot be overemphasize in the contemporary society. Indeed, to create enabling environment in order to achieve an efficient information and communication technology (ICT) in enhancing he capabilities of adult learners must focus attention on the followings:

**Mass literacy campaign:** There is an obvious need for government of Federal Republic of Nigeria to organize mass literacy campaign to enlighten the public on the relevance of information and communication technology (ICT) in enhancing the capabilities of adult learners in the country. Indeed, there is an overt educational gap in the information and communication technology (ICT) in all sectors of Nigeria educational system, especially in adult and non-formal education in Nigeria. This educational gap in information and communication technology (ICT) in enhancing the capabilities of adult learners should be addressed adequately through public enlightenment of the people on the existing of educational gap in the country. Anyanwu, Omolewa, Adeyeri, Okankwon and Siddiqui (1985) stated that if a society is conscious of its educational gap, it is appropriate to fill such educational gap as soon as possible. The means of using mass media in mass literacy campaign programme is usually considered appropriate not only to reach the public on prevailing issues, but to reduce cost considerably in the society. The sources of information for mass communication and public enlightenment are books, newspaper and magazine publications, educational video coverage, radio educational broadcasts, educational films, television and public lectures among others.

Essentially, public enlightenment through mass literacy campaign can reach people anywhere such as office, homes, markets, community listening centres, churches and others. It is pertinent to note that people can receive public enlightenment through mass media either individually or in a group.

Anyanwu, Omelewa, Adeyeri, Okanlawon and Siddiqui (1985) asserted that public enlightenment in mass literacy campaign can be made available to the people in the comfort of their homes, offices, and schools either individually or in a group. Consequently, adult learners can access information and communication technology (ICT) from any location as individuals or a group of people with ultimate aim of enhancing their potential and capabilities to contribute meaningfully to effective service delivery in the society. The adult educator uses the mass media to reach his target audience in the society. The mass media play tremendous role in promoting awareness creation in the society

**2. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Research in Adult and Non-formal Education**

Understandably, a number of developments in technology have certainly affected mutually all aspects of human lives in the contemporary society. Fundamentally, research in adult and non-formal education is an important area of human endeavour which is greatly affected by tremendous technological development in the contemporary computer age. Indeed, technological development in the present day society has, undoubtedly, affected research in adult and non-formal education to a great extent. Schaefer (2005) stated emphatically that increased speed and capacity of computers are enabling people to handle larger and larger sets of data. This tends to indicate that people's access to computer, especially in this contemporary computer age will certainly facilitate research that evolves large volume of data in adult and non-formal education.

Understandably, people could not easily handle extensive research study that involved large data collection for analysis. However, this can only be in exceptional cases where the research has easy access to research grants and institutional assistance. Schaefer (2005) asserted that people who enjoyed grants or great institutional assistance were able to handle census data easily in the past. He further noted that today that people who have access to computers can easily work with census figures. The implication of this is that availability of information and communication technology (ICT) enables people, especially adult learners to work with large data very easily in contemporary global environment.

**3. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Educational Services**

Essentially, application of information and communication technology (ICT) is an important aspect of educational services certainly facilitates the implementation of educational policy in Nigeria. Indeed, application of information and communication technology (ICT) as part of educational services certainly facilitates the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) rightly asserted that educational services help to facilitate the implementation of educational policy in Nigeria. It should be noted that application of information and communication technology (ICT), undoubtedly, facilitates the attainment of educational policy goals in Nigeria. This ultimately promotes effective educational system in the country. Consequently, the application of information and communication technology (ICT) in the right environment, obviously, stimulates efficient educational system that will focus greatly on promoting the abilities of adult learners in adult and non-formal education in Nigeria.

While commenting on the liberation of distance educational, Cook (1989) rightly noted that more than 60 percent of her external students never saw the institution in which they studied. Interestingly, education is currently involved in the transformation of the contemporary

society through the intervention of information and communication technology (ICT) Fitzclarence and Kemmis (1989) observe that educational institutions notably schools, colleges and universities have succeeded in becoming a part of the information revolution in order to assist to provide the required skills and develop the capabilities needed in the society. They further stated the increasing challenges to various types of print media and computer hardware and software including problem-solving and discovery learning as clear indicators of education's role in the new level of social transformation in the society. The challenge, therefore, is the urgent need to explore the possibilities of stimulating the efficient application of information and communication technology (ICT) in meeting the urgent demands of education in Nigeria. The changes in information and communication technology (ICT) should not be confined to new information and communication technologies, but should equally be extended to educational services. This will certainly stimulate great interest in promoting effective and efficient teaching and learning in the contemporary global environment.

**4. Information and Communication Technology (ICT); and Global Reach**

Information and communication technology (ICT) has created a global village in the contemporary society. The emergence of electronic media has, undoubtedly, given rise to a global village. Consequently, through the instrumentality of technological development, especially in the area of information and communication technology (ICT) it is now possible for people to reach any part of the world within few second through internet and satellite services, global service mobile phone services and cable television network. McLuhan (1964) strongly stated that the emergence of electronic media would certainly create a global village. In the views of Schaefer (2005) physical distance is not a barrier in reaching people since instant messaging is very possible across the entire world. This, indeed, tends to indicate that territorial boundaries are no longer barriers to reach people in different parts of the global environment. It is pertinent to note that the mass media through technological development help very immensely to create a global village. This global village initiative is, indeed, achieved in the global environment through information and communication technology (ICT) which can be accessed through the right institutional framework.

Adult and non-formal education has, undoubtedly, employed this strategy of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance the knowledge and skills of people in their various areas of human endeavour in the society. Indeed, instant reaching of people in various parts of the world has defied territorial boundaries as barriers in information and communication technology (ICT) today in the world. Adult and non-formal education clearly advocated that adult learners should endeavour as much as possible to adapt to learning and changes in the contemporary world. This enhance effective service delivery in work place in the society today. Fassel (2000) remarked that adaptability to learning and changes in the society is strong to guarantee successful collaborative business. He further stated that at global level that people are faced with such challenges as technological advances, social and political changes. Adult and non-formal education, therefore, encourages adult learners to be highly conscious of learning situation and changes which will certainly enhance their knowledge and experience in life.

### **Recommendation**

In consideration of the discussions the following recommendations are made as follows:

1. An adult education class should be organized by compute experts and adult educators with the assistance of other change agents in order to help to provide people with relevant information and communication technology (ICT) trainings. This will obviously enable such adult learners to acquire relevant knowledge and skill in information and communication technology (ICT) trainings that will certainly help them to be relevant in the contemporary work environment.
2. There is still a need for people to understand that the application of information and communication technology (ICT) in the right environment helps to stimulate efficient educational system in Nigeria. This will essentially focus greatly on promoting the abilities of adult learners in adult and informal education in Nigeria to be kept abreast with technological development in the contemporary global environment.
3. More realistic fora should be put in place by adult educators to create an awareness that since education is currently involved in the transformation of the contemporary society through the intervention of information and communication technology (ICT) that various educational institutions should urgently become a part of the information and communication technology revolution in the society. This will obviously help them to provide the required skills and knowledge to develop the capabilities needed to drive the contemporary economy.

### **Conclusion**

The challenge currently is on the urgent need to focus on exploring the possibilities of stimulating an effective and efficient application of information and communication technology (ICT) in meeting the urgent demands of education in Nigeria. The innovations in information and communication technology (ICT) should not be confined to new information and communication technology (ICT), but should also be extended to education sector in order to enhance efficient educational services in the country. Indeed, this will obviously stimulate immense interest in promoting an effective and efficient teaching and learning in adult and non-formal education in the contemporary global environment.

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