

A CRITICAL VIEW OF THE AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The paper examines Information and communication technology (ICT) in secondary schools in Rivers State. The concept of ICT, its importance in school record keeping and administration were equally reviewed. The relevance of ICT in curriculum implementation, its availability in secondary schools were also reviewed. The paper also pointed out some challenges and recommended thus, the provision of ICT facilities for effective administration in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Key Words – Information and Communication Technology, Availability, School Administrator, Secondary School and Curriculum.

The management of human and material resources in any establishment is not easy especially the school system that involves all level of people ranging from teachers, non teaching staff and the students from different family background which may influence their entire behaviour is very demanding. Again the government who is the employer is also looking up to you to effectively manage the school system for the overall achievement of the goals of education at this level. Therefore it is important that Information and Communication Technology may be applied in the management of the school.

Generally ICT holds out the opportunity to revolutionize pedagogical methods, expands access to quality education and improves the management of education system (World Bank 2002). Unfortunately in Nigeria schools, traditional patterns of administering the school have not been improved. The traditional methods of teaching still being adopted by secondary school teachers in Nigeria are based on the objectivist epistemology which have been faulted (Osagieder & Idiagh, 2010). It is modern to adopt a modern way of managing the school which is embraced by developed and developing countries of world, hence the world is fast becoming a global village.

This has led to the emergent transformation of managing the school system with the use of computers, compact discs, digital video discs (DVDs), satellite communication and the internet. There is need to brace up to the new challenges and systems of education through the development and use of ICT in Nigeria secondary schools. Already Nigeria is almost two decades behind in embracing the use of computer in primary and secondary schools (Osagieder & Idiagh, 2010). Ezekute, Okwo and Usman in Okwudishu (2005) separately reported that current education programmes in Nigeria Universities do not provide enough computer training for the school administrators to be able to use computer confidently in providing effective leadership in school. As it is however, when integrated properly into the board educational programme, the most important use of ICT in education is as a pedagogical -tool (World Bank 2002). Successful integration of ICT in the school system depends

largely on the availability and competence and the attitude of principals and teachers towards the role of modern technologies in teaching and learning (World Bank, 2002).

What necessitated the paper was as a result of schools not providing detailed data or information about school records and principals effectiveness. There is poor statistical data of students, teachers, and lost of vital documents such as student results to either rain and rodents, lack of current information through the internet because the world is globalized. There are cases of financial misappropriation among the school administrators, low level of administrative competencies and nonchalant attitude exhibited by school administrators which could be as a result of unavailability of ICT in assisting them in the day to day administration of the schools hence this paper.

The Concept of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Afolabi, Adedapo and Adeyanju (2005) defined information as idea conceived in the human mind, while communication is the transfer of that information from the original source to the destination where it is needed with the intention of producing a change in behavior of the receiver.

When information and communication assume drifts away from the orthodox verbal and print media, towards the more recent electronic media then the concept is known as ICT.

Iyehowa and Obuah (2005) defined Information and Communication Technology as the handling and processing of information or instruction, graphs, texts and images for use by means of electronics and communication devices such as computer and telephone. However information Communication Technology (ICT) could be defined in this paper as the means of accessing or receiving, storing, transferring, processing and sending ideas, perception or information through computer and other communication facilities.

Achonye and Nwiyi (2010) opined that Information and Communication Technologies are of combination of hardware and software media and delivery systems, and their examples are:

- Digital video camera
- Multimedia personal computer (PC) laptop and note book
- Idea of virtual classroom and virtual reality
- Computer-audited conferencing-video and audio conferencing
- E-mail internet and World Wide Web (www)
- Digital libraries and so on

Importance of ICT in Record Keeping and Administration

The importance of ICT in record keeping and administration, especially in secondary schools cannot be over emphasized.

Achonye and Nwiyi (2010), listed the following as the usefulness of ICT in school record keeping.

(1) Availability of Information: Information and communication Technologies helps to maintain adequate and accurate records in our schools. It increases the rate of dissemination of information to the students and teachers.

(2) Easy retrieval: It also leads to easy accessibility and dissemination of information on school records which helps in national planning, financial budgeting, effective implementation of the educational programmes and policies.

(3) Administrative efficiency: One major setback in achieving the educational objective of secondary education in Nigeria is inefficiency of the principals in keeping some records. Principals

are not good in keeping records, but with the Introduction of information and communication Technologies such as computers, digital libraries, email, internet and so on where information are stored and disseminated, they can do better in keeping records and become effective and efficient in performing their prescribed functions as administrators.

(4) Good record keeping also helps the principals for administrative convenience. Record keeping helps the principal to effectively administer the school, whether statutory and non statutory records, all are geared towards smooth running of the school system.

Relevance of ICT in Curriculum Implementation

The primary goal of every educational institution is to achieve the objectives which stems from effective teaching and learning. This can only be possible if deliberate efforts are made to ensure the implementation of the curriculum. The curriculum at any school level remains the official and authentic content that translate the expectations of the society into bits of knowledge, skills and attitude that should be translated to learners within a given programme or course in both the formal school and non-formal systems. Nwahunanya (2008), defined curriculum as an organized content of a course of study. It is meant to be a guide to the implemental who in turn organize them for efficient and effective implementation.

However, the indices for the implementation of the curriculum include the content and structure of the syllabus, the number and quality of teachers and instructors, the quality of students, the quality and quantity of equipment used for instruction, adequacy of classroom, personnel involved in the process of teaching/learning and the relevance of the assessment and evaluation methods adopted (Nwiyi, 2009).

Furthermore, for curriculum to be effectively implemented in the secondary schools, there is need for the provision of adequate equipment used for instruction which include ICT facilities such as computers, digital video camera, e-mail, internet, digital libraries and so on (Achonye & Nwiyi, 2010). According to Adelokun & Eyengho (2010). The following are importance of ICT in curriculum implementation in secondary schools.

(1) It helps the teachers and students to get self-placed auto-instruction related to the curricular and on curricular areas of education. The precision, speed and accuracy in receiving, transforming and using information and communication is well acquired through ICT as they become acquainted and trained for handling well the sophisticated electronic appliances, software and techniques used for information and communication purposes.

(2) The knowledge of ICT would help school administrators, teachers and students to satisfy their urges or curiosity, inventiveness, construction and so on. They get acquainted with relevant sources of information, the ways and means of extracting required information, methods of information processing. All these would enhance their teacher ability and skills in the implementation of the curriculum.

(3) Information and communication technology aids in the effective implementation of the curriculum. This is because it helps to speed up the rate of teaching and learning thereby enabling students to learn more in a less time. Not only has it taken over teachers' routine job of information transmission and heavy burden of administrative tasks such as marking and recording. Thus, the teacher will have more time for creative work with students for research and other gainful activities.

(4) ICT makes instruction more powerful and more meaningful. New forms and routine events (in compressed, expanded, or normal form) can be brought to the classroom via the use of motion

pictures, hence learning becomes more concrete, real, immediate and permanent, thereby bridging the gap between the outside world and the world inside the schools (Adelokun and Eyengho, 2010).

(5) ICT provides the teachers the means of arousing and sustaining the interest of learners as well as changing students' attitude. Introductory film, filmstrip, T.V. programme and demonstration help the teacher in stimulating learners' interest. It opens possibilities for further exploration, present meaningful information and open up avenues for the improvement of the students reading skills, and teaching are provided with opportunity to vary their pedagogy of instruction.

Advantages of ICT to School Administrators

Iyekowa and Obuah (2005) identified the following as the advantages of information communication technology ICT to school administrators;

(1) The school administrators have access to many libraries in the world. Internet is connected globally and as such every information in the world is contained in it, hence gives every school principal the opportunity to access the libraries in the world. This would enable the administrator update his knowledge on the current happenings in the world.

(2) It provides easy production, storage, retrieval and modification of course materials. When information are stored in the system, it becomes easier for its retrieval when necessary unlike the traditional way of storing information in the book shelves that may be damaged by rain or termites. This means that such information cannot be easily retrieved, hence rendering the administration ineffective, but with the introduction of ICT in schools, information can easily be stored, and retrieved. It would also help the teacher modify course materials for effective teaching and learning.

(3) It increases interaction time among schools administrators to exchange ideas. It helps them to exchange ideas with their colleagues in the other parts of the world. Ideas could be inform of new methodology, in teaching and learning, new concept in education and instructional materials that promotes effective teaching, learning and administration of schools.

(4) The school administrators are provided with ready materials for teaching subjects in a given areas. ICT is a global issue and every relevant techniques and materials for teaching and learning are provided in the system by experts in various fields worldwide. School administrators could only use those materials in their various disciplines to improve their performance or skills in school.

(5) The teaching of the large class is less stress and more efficient. Teachers teach with less stress with ICT to so many students because less energy is applied and the students flows with the teacher, hence the facilities are been used by both the teachers and school administrators in every day teaching/learning and the administration of the school.

(6) It enables the teacher achieve his set objectives in the shortest possible time. Lessons are made more real and concrete when ICT facilities are been used. Using already made materials in the system makes the lesson more enjoyable and interesting, hence achievement of the set objectives in the shortest possible time. But when these ICTs are not provided in the school it hampers the effectiveness of both the teachers and the school administrators because both would use them for effective teaching/learning and administration of the schools.

Critical View of Availability and Accessibility of ICT in Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Personal experience showed that secondary schools in Rivers State lacks ICT components, especially the schools in the rural areas of Rivers State, ICT materials are very expensive and as such, the government has refused to acquire such materials to the schools and such situation impedes good

intention of the same government in providing effective leadership in the administration of secondary education. The unavailability of computers in the principal's office hinders effective administration of the school (Nwiyi, Okorie & Daminabo 2013).

Information can be stored or kept by the principal through electronic modes such as audio, video tapes, computers which helps in storing and retrieving important information when needed by the administrator in his day to day administration of the school without looking for documents, papers, letters, results in the shelves, cupboard, tables etc which may not be found as at when it is needed. Such situation is frustrating and demoralizing. But with the availability of computers in the principal's office these problems will be things of the past. Principals will therefore be more effective and efficient in the administration of the schools. ICT is very necessary in the financial management of the school fund. This is an important role of the school principal. Money generated or released to the school need to be accounted for, after spending them. It will help to give a detailed account of the income and expenditure. Experience showed that these ICT materials are not there to assist the school administrator in managing the finance of the school.

Internet in the principal's office can be used by the school administrator as a source of information to enhance effective administration. But the principal's offices do not have internet connection hence the principals cannot incorporate content found on the net into the administrative process for effective and efficient administration of the school.

Absence of the E-library – the internet unlike encyclopaedia and traditional libraries has enabled a sudden and extreme decentralization of information and data. It has further triggered an explosion of knowledge. The use of E-library will facilitate the administrative effectiveness of the school managers. According to Iredia & Udi, (2010) the internet presents so many possibilities for knowledge acquisition and dissemination. They opined that it equips the school administrator on the current management techniques for smooth running of the school.

Achonye & Nwiyi (2010), in their findings discovered that the public secondary schools in Nigeria especially in Rivers State do not have Information and Communication Technology equipment and facilities. They also found out that some school administrators do not have even the ideas of ICT as a device in facilitating the smooth running of their school as regards to record keeping.

Research works have shown that most secondary schools in Nigeria have either insufficient or no ICT tools for the ever increasing population of students in the school, and where they are available, they are by implication a matter of out of bounds to students. (Chattel, 2002; Cheng, 2003; Chiemekwe, 2004).

Fakeye (2010), in his study also found out that most of the schools do not have computers hence they are not connected to the internet. He added that those who have computers do not use them for teaching but solely for administrative purposes.

Okwudishu (2005) revealed in his study that the ICT facilities in secondary schools are not available and because of its unavailability in school, it hampers the administrator's use of ICT.

ICT and its Challenges in the Administration of Secondary Schools

(1) High cost of ICT facilities: Itogboje and Okubote (2002) pointed to high cost of ICT equipment as a challenge to the available and accessibility of the materials. They also noted that the problems might not be the funds nor the technology but rather the will on the part of government to include it in the budget for education, in the country or state. The installation of internet, computer

and other accessories and their maintenance require huge amount of money. The purchase and installation of computers may not be possible where huge capital is not available.

(2) Illiteracy among the principals is a serious setback to effective management of the schools, even when ICT facilities are provided, they are unutilized by the principals because they lack basic knowledge of the computer system, and to maintain adequate and accurate records in the school becomes a problem. Poor record keeping by the principal due to poor level of computer literacy impedes effective management of the school system.

(3) The principals and teachers lack the inner driver on the usefulness and relevance of ICT in Secondary School setting. Most principals in secondary schools in Rivers State are ignorant of the usefulness of ICT in running the schools as they are computer illiterate and cannot support and manage the internet connectivity or application of computing in the teaching and administrative process. This explains why it is often said that it is the level of training given to the teachers in any nation that will determine the quality of education of that nation as teachers cannot give what they do not have to their students.

(4) Incessant power failure in Nigeria hampers effectiveness of the principals in the management of secondary schools. One of the major challenges that Nigerians are faced with is inadequate power supply, and Rivers State is no exception. The computer has to make use of electrical power to perform, because computers work effectively and efficiently on a very conducive atmosphere where there are air-conditioners. Since we do not have this electrical power always, using ICT without adequate arrangement for regular supply is a big mirage even when the computers are provided. Again the cost of running a generator to power the ICT facilities are too expensive to maintain in secondary schools, and the principals cannot provide such money hence its usage in the management of secondary school is therefore impeded.

(5) Resistance to change: Osagiede and Idiaghe (2010) attributed the syndrome of resistance to change among the Nigerian teachers as an impediment to application of ICT in the classroom. Some teachers view the use of computer for education as a means of displacing them from their cherished job rather than as instructional materials to enrich teaching and learning. Also they regard the use of computer as an increase in their tasks in the classroom without adequate compensation, the same is applicable to school administrators who also believed that they can administer the school without any form of ICT equipment. They also see it as another work load in their day to day administration of the schools.

Conclusion

Quality education begets quality products which enhances the economic development of any nation. This is why it is pertinent for any nation to adequately fund the educational sector to attract this development for the interest of the masses. And adequate availability of ICT in Secondary Schools will enhance both the performance of the school administrators and teachers alike which invariably would lead to quality of the secondary school graduates for the overall development of the nation.

Recommendation

Based on the, issue raised In this paper on information and communication technology ICT in secondary schools in Rivers State the following recommendations are made.

1. The government and proprietor should endeavour to produce, install and make Information Communication Technology available to principals.
2. Principals should undergo in services training on how to manipulate ICT facilities for better performance.
3. Competent hands should be recruited for the servicing and maintenance of the available ICT equipments so that they can be used for a relatively long period of time.
4. Provision of adequate and interrupted power. This will provide the needed power supply that can allow internets and E- libraries to work in our institutions of learning for the effectiveness of the school administrators.

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