

IMPROVING THE FUNCTIONALITY OF ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMME THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

OMOSOHWOFA FELIX AREDIA

*Department of Computer Science,
Umar Ibn Ibrahim El-Kanemi College of Education Science and Technology,
Bama, Borno State.*

Abstract

Functional literacy for human resource management is a fundamental right for every individual in a functional society. For a functional adult literacy programme to be smoothly run, an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) apparatus must be needed. Many adult literacy programmes seem to concentrate only on the teaching of the skills of reading and writing. This paper work explains the necessary ways to build a functional adult literacy programme through the integration of Information and Communication Technology. The undeniable potentials of ICT in adult literacy programme are but not limited to improved productivity, poverty eradication, critical consciousness, and political participation which promote stability and relevance of opportunity in the changing world. Conclusion was drawn based on the above ICT potentials and the following Gate-way to improve a functional adult literacy programme were made: ICT should be part of adult literacy programme, adult educators and instructors should be properly oriented on the use of ICT tools and the government should give adult literacy programme a meaningful financial support.

Keywords: Improving Adult Literacy Programme, ICT, Human Resource Management, Nigeria

Introduction

The world is in its major change due to ICT intervention. ICT is a very broad field and many have seen its intervention as changing gear for a better life. According to Akir, 2006 ICT is a term that refers to stand alone computers, networked devices and telecommunication technologies with multimodal interface, mobile phones/devices with capability to perform data communication and other technologies that allow multimodal and interactive communication. When ICT is properly utilized in adult literacy programme, will create huge positive impact in the lives of adults for effective human resource management. One of the major gains of ICT integration in adult literacy programme for human resource management in Nigeria has been the vast policies on ICT infrastructures over the past years. However, real human resource management goes beyond ICT policies and little or no implementations. Implementations, training of instructors, supervisions as well as maintenance are necessary. Setting adult literacy programme for Human Resource Management (HRM) agenda require identifying ICT capacity and education skills of instructors. The demand for ICT-

related skills is not limited to the ICT sector but arises in all areas of economic activities of the society and adult literacy programmes shouldn't be left out. In fact for an inclusive information society, digital literacy skills are now life skills required by all (Jide, 2008).

No one can deny the fact that ICT as it is, is a knowledge-based industry that offers a variety of ICT learning opportunities in the public and private sectors to boost human resources. The wide range of educational routes for developing ICT skills include training courses, formal degree programmes, certification programmes, e-learning and work experience opportunities; but one who is not opportune to be on these categories can acquire ICT skills through adult literacy programme.

Ugwoegbu, 2003 gave the idea of functional literacy as an educational, social-economic activity in areas prior to management, regards ICT potential as tool providing functional literacy for adult learners if well integrated in the programme. This, no doubt, will improve the potentials of the adult learner for human resource management.

Usefulness of ICT for Human Resource Management

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Human Resource Management (HRM) was first coined as, "Integration of Information Systems (IS) in HRM" in the 1980s for administrative processes and payroll processing (Bondarouk, Ruel and Vander, 2009) creating the concept of Human Resource Information System (HRIS). The systems were targeted at the Human Resource Department, aiming to improve the processes and consequently, improving the service to the business (Ruel, Bondarouk and Looise, 2004). HRM includes activities such as recruiting, training, developing and rewarding people in an organization. HRM must aim at achieving competitiveness in the field of Human Resources (HR) by providing constant educational and training programs for the personal and professional development of employees in an organization. ICT has altered the process and products of various organizations including education, thereby providing efficiency and effectiveness in the organizations. ICT can make the following major impacts in Human Resource Management:

1. Better services to line managers: The primary interest of both Human Resource and line managers is the success of the business. The human resource supports the workforce of the organization. HR and line managers review projections concerning future business demands to determine whether to train current employees, prepare them for promotion or to recruit new ones with higher level of skills. One of the largest changes in training and development in the past years is delivering training digitally through computers, laptops or mobile phones (Brown and Charlier, 2013). With the development of technology and Web 2.0, a blended approach will be facilitated using virtual environments, gamification and mobile technologies (Stone et al., 2015). Training and developing the line managers with IT tools will, therefore, prepare the line managers for a number of leadership tasks.

2. Distance working: ICT enabled globalization and supported the change of work arrangements such as working from anywhere at any time due to the increased speed and volume of information flow. Today, telework and other web-based job applications reduce the boundaries between geographies and empower organizations to work closer (Stone, et al., 2015). Telework is defined as variety of arrangements that involve working away from the employer's main campus either in satellite office, client based work, modes of transportation or at home through ICT (Taskin and Bridoux, 2010).

3. Costs reduction: Cost-reduction and efficiency considerable benefits can be obtained as various reports are made using IT tools. Organizational performance can be increased by implementing management by objectives and using a participative style of management through Human Resource Information Technology tools. Considering the HR role as greatly administrative, cost reduction is the main goal for implementing e-HRM; this area of support is the most pressured for cost reduction (Francis, Parkes and Reddington, 2014). Ultimately, it is possible to deliver HR services online, without face-to-face contact, hence outsourcing HR activities thereby reducing costs (Marler, 2009).

4. Inventory management tools and human resource management: Entrepreneurs with business acumen maintained that the performance of an organization can be made more effective and efficient by customer intimacy, operational efficiency, and leading edge. Customer needs must be met by customization and by providing outstanding customer instances. For this purpose, organizations use HR IT tools to provide a universal set of products and diversify the business by providing improved products and services.

5. Data management and critical analysis: The goal of Human Resource (HR) analytics is to relate HR data and business outcomes such as sales or customer satisfaction, in order to decide which indicators should be used to measure Human Resource practices and outcomes (Douthitt and Mondore, 2014). Data management becomes easier when IT is used and it becomes paper-free. Organizational performance data can be critically analyzed by the HR IT tools more often if it's online and becomes readily accessible to everyone. HR systems allow the possibility to capture and store data which can be retrieved at any time, with different kinds of information at the same moment.

6. Customer service and human resource management: Organization performance can be obtained by evaluating the reliability of service and understanding the quality of customers. Value can come from a reliable service, as customers are assured that they will receive the service at the promised time and in good standard. As organizational change is inevitable, critical success factors and key performance indicators should be revised, and relevant Human Resource IT tool must be devised for the better quality of work.

7. Reduce administrative HR work and improve standardization: The efficiency savings produced by e-tools are higher due to the economies of scale triggered by the larger number of employees (Parry 2011). E-HRM allows a more efficient administration, since it speeds up transactions, reduces information errors, improves the tracking and control of HR actions (Bondarouk, Ruel and Vander, 2009); thereby improving standardization and management processes. Additionally, web-based HR tools enable the decentralization of HR taskmaking administrative tasks become standardized and easy to manage, delegating them to a line management responsibility (Ruel, Bondarouk and Looise, 2004).

8. Enhancing management: During the last decade, the fast development of the Internet enhanced the adoption of Electronic Human Resource Management (e-HRM) (Strohmeier, 2009). Human Resource IT tools can supplement management and enhance efficiency and effectiveness, which in-turn lead to the success of the organization as a whole. Within an organization, managers measure performance, sometimes by comparing it against a benchmark. They ensure that all departments are improving its procedures and controls targeting its activities on better achievement. These can be better utilized by customized HR IT tools in accordance with the organization.

9. Career development and human capital management: The career planning tool is a learning and knowledge based system that helps successful businessman around the world to manage their personal development and career paths along with those of their employees. Performance evaluation and career progression can be a key motivating factor for the employees to work effectively and efficiently. A sound performance evaluation systems using HR IT tool is crucial for an organization. The system must be a sound one so that people can rely on it.

10. Effective recruiting: Nowadays, organizations have realized that effective recruiting cannot be done without the use of Information Technology (IT). Organizations are now using job portals on the internet to search for the best candidates for a position. Employers can present all necessary information related to job, careers and personal development of each employee on portals online. The Human Resource IT tools not only help in hiring the best potential but also retain it. Many larger companies use e-HR to attract job applicants through job opening ads and applications (Lukaszewski and Stone, 2009).

Functional Potentials for Adults in Adult Literacy Programme for HRM through ICT Integration

ICT is a skilled oriented domain that offers a variety of ICT learning opportunities to the human populace. The traditional literacy which focuses mainly on the teaching of reading and writing is insufficient for adult learners to adapt this computer age to enable them face the real world challenges (Mbah, 2016). Meanwhile, (Gargallo and Galve, 2007) highlighted that ICT alone is not sufficient to guarantee increase in organizational output. It should be combined with other human attributes like capabilities, special talent of workers, direction and proactive spirit of the workers. Thus, an increase in output can only be assured with a combination of these attributes and ICT. The functional potentials for adult learners in adult literacy programme using ICT include:

1. Critical thinking: Critical thinking deals with creative and judgmental thinking ability. Critical thinking involves using one's brain to mentally manipulate information to form concepts, solve problems, reason and take decisions (Odo, 2010). They further stress that critical thinking is the act of using the mind to conceive ideas, draw inferences, and make judgments which very few people utilize their ability to think thereby allowing themselves to be caged by their problems. The adult populace is laden with a lot of life tasks which if not urgently tackled could lead to untimely death. Illiterate adult learners require to go through the process of critical consciousness so that they can appreciate more clearly the dimensions of their problems, and how to satisfy their individual and societal needs. Critical thinking skill will help them to critically examine situations and issues confronting them, thereby become sensitized to take positive decisions and actions to tackle the challenges of life. There is need for functional adult literacy programme geared by ICT in order to develop the adult learners critical thinking skills which is an entrepreneurship quality needed for human capital management.

2. Improved productivity: It has been observed that many adult education centres in Nigeria are merely offering basic and secondary education to the adult learners, who did not have the opportunity of attending school when they were young. Functional adult literacy programme ought to move beyond offering basic and secondary education to adults who did not go to school early in life to be occupation-oriented.

Occupation-oriented education for the adult learners will help to produce functional adult populace indispensable for national development. (Mbah, 2006) found that many adult learners in adult education centres enrolled into the programme in order to improve their trade. ICT offers the adult learners modern, effective and efficient ways of carrying out various trades. (Umoh, 2010) stated that the integration of ICT in education will enhance human resources of a country. Hence the use of ICT in adult literacy programme will teach adult learners various strategies that could make their occupation more efficient.

3. Improved Political Participation: Man is a political being. Adults as well as youths all over the world are engaged in one political activity or the other. Adults engage in politics in order to influence the government of their countries to take decisions and actions that will enhance their condition of living and that of future generations. Learning how to read and write is not enough for adult in adult literacy centres. They should also decide on things that affect them, which is one of their fundamental human rights. Functional adult literacy programme enables the adult learners to promote democracy, giving them access to the manifestoes of various political parties, so that they can independently decide who to vote for, instead of being misled by unscrupulous politicians. (Ocho, 2005) opined that “educational system which seeks to preserve, transmit, change and advance the culture of the people, depends on the political class to perform its roles effectively or otherwise”. They buttress the point that no aspect of private or public life or of education can advance beyond the level and the will of the political class. (World Bank 2002) make it clear that ICT create economic, social and political empowerment opportunities for people living in poverty in the developing world. When adult learners are adequately equipped with ICT skills, they can make their voices heard on political issues through the social media (Face Book, WhatsApp, etc).

4. Poverty eradication: One of the major challenges facing the developing countries is the high rate of poverty. The degree of poverty in Nigeria is enormous and has serious negative effects on the people, especially the adult populace on whom the welfare of the children and the youth lie. Hence, any meaningful adult literacy programme for adult illiterates ought to be functional in terms of wealth creation. One of the eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is to eradicate poverty and hunger (Maduawesi, 2005). Infusing entrepreneurship training in adult literacy classes will equip the adults with profitable skills with which to create wealth. This will help them to be employers of labour, thereby tackling the problem of unemployment and youth restiveness in the country. (Umoh, 2010) stated that functional education should engender in the learner the possession of skills which will make them functional members of the society on graduation. ICT in adult literacy programme could assist in equipping the adult learners with employable skills. The adult learners on graduation could then set up ICT business centres for income generation.

5. Relevance in the Changing World: No adult literacy programme could be said to be functional if it does not help the learners to adapt to situations in the changing world. The dynamic nature of the society and the world at large poses certain challenges from time to time which call for adult literacy programme that will help them to keep abreast with current issues, so that they can remain relevant in their trades and other aspects of their lives. We live in information age, characterized by the acquisition, analysis, and communication of information through the use of ICT facilities. The use of computer-based information systems help to convert, store, protect, process, transmit and retrieve information.

ICT in adult literacy centres will equip the adult learners with the skill of information retrieval, storage, processing and transmission. Problems of inadequate infrastructure, lack of reading materials, over-populated classrooms, and inadequate qualified teaching personnel in Nigerian education system and in adult education in particular could obstruct free flow of information in conventional classroom setting. (Odo, 2010).

Gate-way to Improve a Functional Adult Literacy Programme for HRM

Nigeria must develop and implement proactive and pro-people HRM for ICT policies. In Nigeria the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) is responsible for developing, implementing and managing ICT policies (Federal Ministry of Education, 2019). Such policies should be based on realistic and meaningful ICT for managerial goals. There is a need for clear policy direction on HRM for ICT in adult literacy programme.

Setting ICT for managerial goals is about taking advantage of digital economic opportunities to meet national needs. Priority areas to consider include software development and management, ICT services, ICT enabled services, business process outsourcing, and hardware. HRM policies should identify the skills required to meet such goals, as well as programmes for promoting and enhancing opportunities in capacity building (Marler and Fisher, 2013). The agenda will make sense by addressing issues such as cost of ICT education, infrastructure, brain drain, women in ICT, open source research, etc. It should contain measures to encourage and support local software developers and provide incentives for investing in software development/managerial training. Creative financing should be used to support adult learners, instructors and learning centres by the government.

Multi-stakeholder collaborative initiatives are required to make the policies meaningful and grounded in reality (Bondarouk, Ruel and Vander, 2009). In particular, private sector providers in ICT literacy programmes and employers should have more input in policy formulation and critical strategic areas (licensing, regulation, certification, research) that affect ICT in adult literacy programme. Though active private sector participation is required but there must be genuine commitment and leadership on the part of the government to follow through plans and implementation of policies. Initiatives should also focus on areas with the greatest potential for immediate and long term socio-economic growth, the knowledge gaps, uneven spread of skills, divides, attracting investment, as well as opportunities in domestic and international markets.

Conclusion

Enhancing public awareness and understanding the benefits of ICT is a high priority in the agenda of ICT integration in adult literacy programme. The knowledge culture gets adult interested in thinking, learning, and facing issues with ICT and knowledge. Investing in development of ICT culture in adult literacy programmes, has embraced constant change, knowledge hunger, lifelong learning, creative thinking and entrepreneurship; knowingly that the best way they can change their culture and thinking is the attention they pay to their local needs and the reality of their lives which ICT provides.

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