

# MANAGEMENT OF ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

A BOOK IN HONOUR OF PROFESSOR BALA ZAKARI

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# **MANAGEMENT OF ADULT AND NON - FORMAL EDUCATION FOR SOCIO - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA:**

**A Book in Honour of Professor Bala Zakari**

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## CHAPTER THIRTY NINE

### ONLINE LEARNING SPACE OPPORTUNITY FOR LITERACY EDUCATION AND SKILLS ACQUISITION DELIVERY IN NIGERIA

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#### **Introduction**

The low level of enrolment of people in classroom-based teaching in today's technological age has necessitated among scholars and practitioners, the integration of ICT into the teaching of literacy education and skills acquisition delivery through various online learning applications. This is because social media is gradually becoming a vital part of life in the twenty-first century as most people live their life online due to the increasing trend of social websites and applications. In this digital age, the term "technology" has permeated all fields globally including literacy education because it has transformed the advent of the way people carry out certain activities. The effect of Information and Communication Technology in education generally has helped transform the teaching and learning process from being highly teacher-centred to being learner-centred and capacity to enhance literacy education delivery in Nigeria. It has been observed from our society these days, that the effects of technology have also contributed to the low level of enrolment of people in literacy classes with the increase in the use of phones. The reason is that the advent of Android and Smartphones opened up opportunities for people to study independently with the help of computers, the internet, social media platforms, social networking platforms, and web and mobile applications. Based on the current trend in the use of ICT in the world of work, our education policymakers, scholars and practitioners must begin to think of integrating ICT for the promotion of literacy education and skills acquisition delivery.

It is obvious in our technology age, that no nation's literacy programmes can be well implemented or achieved without ICT usage. To sustain literacy for development in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a need to focus more on the use of ICTs in all forms of literacy programmes in the country. A discussion on online learning space opportunities for literacy education and skills acquisition delivery cannot be properly contextualized without a contemporary understanding of what online learning, literacy education and skills acquisition are all about. This is because the contextualization and perception of the three concepts keep expanding as the challenges confronting humanity keep emanating. Therefore, this chapter is aimed at examining the roles ICTs and the adoption of online learning in enhancing literacy education and skills acquisition delivery in response to the challenges of low level of enrolment of people in classroom-based teaching and the need for all literacy stakeholders and practitioners to adopt the use of online learning space for literacy education and skills acquisition delivery in Nigeria.

#### **Concept of Online Learning**

The term "online learning" can be used to refer to a wide range of programmes that use the Internet to provide instructional materials and facilitate interactions between teachers and students and in some cases among students as well. Online learning can be fully online, with all instructions taking place through the internet, or online elements can be combined with

face-to-face interactions in what is known as blended learning (Horn & Staker, 2011). Rosenberg (2001: p5) defines learning as ‘‘the process by which people acquire new skills or knowledge to enhance their performance’’. He explains that the perceptions of learning in organisations are undergoing a distinct transformation. First, training should no longer only focus on the act of training but must demonstrate a positive impact on performance or outcomes. As the world is changing, the learning scenario is changing with the change in the introduction of information and communication technology, which gives room to the new concept called e-learning. In his book, Rosenberg (2001) defines e-learning as a networked phenomenon allowing for instant revisions and feedback. In addition, it is delivered using standard Internet technology. As online learning has become more pervasive, the learning theories around it have evolved. Most authors, not only (Benson, 2002; Carliner, 2004; Conrad, 2002, Ally, 2004) define online learning in terms of access to learning experiences but also of the potential for flexibility and participants’ interaction.

### **Online Learning Applications**

Online learning applications are tools used for pedagogical and pedagogical purposes that utilize social software and/or social media to facilitate learning through interactions between individuals and systems (Appana, 2008). The idea of setting up "online learning applications" is to make education more convenient and widespread. It also allows interaction between users and/or the software which can bring a different aspect to learning. People can acquire knowledge through distance learning applications comprising Learning applications, Google applications, Social Media applications and Learning applications such as Learning Management System (LMS), Moodle and Zoom, Google Meet and Google Classroom, Telegram and WhatsApp (Appana, 2008). Online learning applications may mediate in formal or informal learning environments to help create connections between learners, instructors and information. These connections form dynamic knowledge networks. Online learning applications are used in schools for teaching/learning. Within a school environment, the use of online learning applications can affect not only the user (learner) but his/her administrator as well as his/her instructor. It brings a different approach to the traditional way of learning which affects the student and his/her support circle (Hewett, & Power, 2007). Online learning applications are used for people who are willing to share their good ideas/thoughts with someone else. The ideas can be related to either academic studies or any other daily skills that they want to share with others. Online learning applications connect learning to our daily lives. It creates a learning environment more conducive to today's society (Hewett, 2007).

### **Conceptual Views of Literacy in Literature**

In the beginning, the world did not begin with literacy, at least not with the tradition of literacy as linguistics and written elements. Living a qualitative life was never a problem as indigenous communities in Africa had literacy of their own. These practices were undervalued and marginalized by the introduction of formal literacy. The communities were not ‘tabula rasa’ waiting for the Gutenberg printed material as some scholars assume. However, the traditional system had inadequacies (Omolewa 1981; Aderinoye 1997; Sarumi 2005). Even though there is no controversy as regards ‘‘literacy as the significant step in building a better life’’ (Tahir 1987: p. 7; Majasan 1989: p12), the question ‘‘what is literacy?’’ though deceptively simple, opens a world of complexities. The conceptual history of literacy dated back to its universal conception as reading, writing and numeracy (Aderinoye 2018: p3). Street (1984) referred to this view of literacy as autonomous literacy. Incidentally, this



was the view subscribed to by UNESCO in its first definition of literacy thus: “a person is literate who can read, with understanding, both read a short simple statement on his or her everyday life” (UNESCO 1978 echoed in Okedara 1981: p6.; Aderinoye 1997: p8). This view of literacy is perceived as an outcome-driven approach to skill acquisition. It is seen as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end. This perception is globally used as the basis for the computation of literacy rate for a population aged 15 years and older is usually calculated based on reading and writing ability (Aderinoye 2018: p3).

An expanded vision of literacy was captured in the Draft Proposal and Plan for The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD, 2002) thus:

Literacy policies and programmes today require going beyond the limited view of literacy that has dominated in the past. Literacy for all requires a renewed vision of literacy, which will foster cultural identity, democratic participation and citizenship, tolerance and respect for others, social development, peace and progress. It must admit that literacy is not confined to any particular age (childhood and adulthood), an institution such as the school system), or a sector (such as education); that is related to various dimensions of personal and social life and development, and that it is a life-learning process. Such renewed vision toward literacy for all, calls for renewed modalities operations, monitoring, and accountability procedures and mechanisms (UNESCO 2005b, p.25).

The above UNLD view of literacy takes political, social and economic transformations into account and recognizes that people acquire and use literacy for different purposes. It also acknowledges that practices of literacy are embedded in different cultural processes, individual circumstances and collective structures (Omolewa, 2010). This ‘plural’ vision sees literacy as culturally, linguistically and temporally diverse. Since literacy is shaped by cultural, educational and state institutions constraints on achieving literacy do not lie only with the individual but are also embedded in broader social relations (Fasokun, 2005). Arising from the UNLD's expanded vision of literacy, the Hamburg Declaration and the Agenda for the Future of Literacy (CONFINTEA 1997) conceptualize literacy through a broad lens, referring to it as “the basic knowledge and skills needed by all in a rapidly changing world” p5. In 2008, UNESCO submitted to the United Nations General Assembly, the international plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade, which noted that across the globe, many authorities recognize the multiple dimensions and evolving nature of literacy, with new literacies emerging as well as changing patterns of learning, including the use of digital technology.

### **New Constructs on Literacy Perception and Its Core Values**

Based on the new construct toward the perception of literacy, it is no longer debatable that literacy is a prerequisite for most forms of learning. As stated in the preamble of the UN General Assembly resolution which proclaimed the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD):

Literacy is crucial to the acquisition, by every child, youth and adult, of essential life skills that enable them to address the challenges they can face in life and represents an essential step in

basic education, which is an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century (UN, 2005: 25).

Therefore, some of the values commonly associated with literacy, as documented, are:

- (i) literacy is a prerequisite for most forms of learning, whatever the age group;
- (ii) literacy provides a solid foundation for poverty reduction and sustainable development in pursuit of a democratic and stable society;
- (iii) literacy provides a basis for respect for human rights, the universalization of basic education, and conflict resolution, nutritional sufficiency, and for an overall improved quality of life (Okedara 1981; Omolewa 1983; Aderinoye 1997; Laoye 1999);
- (iv) literacy is an indispensable means for effective social and economic participation, contributing to human development and poverty reduction. It empowers and nurtures inclusive societies and contributes to the fair implementation of human rights (Adedokun, 2018)
- (iv) literacy is a key to communication and learning, and fundamental for active participation in today's knowledge-based societies. Without literacy, people are excluded from access to, and the use of, knowledge, and even from the most of basic information they may need for daily living (Atang 2014; Akintayo 2018);
- (v) literacy skills are essential in today's societies, conferring benefits on individuals, communities and nations (Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2006).
- (vi) Being literate adds value to a person's life. Literacy can be instrumental in the pursuit of development- at personal, family and community levels; effective participation in the electoral process, as well as at micro-levels of nations, regions, and the world (Omolewa 2001; Akinpelu 2008; Aderinoye 2009; Adedokun 2008).
- (vii) Literacy is an indispensable foundation that enables young people and adults to engage in learning opportunities at all levels of the learning continuum (Egunyomi 2015).
- (ix) It involves a continuum of learning and proficiency levels which allows citizens to engage in lifelong learning and participate fully in the community, workplace and the wider society.
- (x) It is an essential means of building people's knowledge, skills and competencies to cope with the evolving challenges and complexities of life, culture, economy and societal development (UNESCO and UIL 2016).

### **Concept of Skills Acquisition**

The word 'skill' is an essential concept in many fields of study including sociology, psychology, human resources management, economics and education. Unlike concepts and constructs in the natural sciences, skill is one of those Social Science words in parlance with many meanings, numerous synonyms such as "ability"; "competence"; "knack"; "aptitude" and "talent", varied imprecise translations in other languages (Green, 2011). Widely regarded as a focus for analytical research and a core object for policy interventions in the modern global high-technology era, scholars in various disciplinary fields ascribe high importance to 'skill' but they appear to be talking about different things when they converse (Green, 2011). For instance, while some (Beardwell & Holden, 2011: p.745) construe it as 'the ability that has been acquired by training' others (Klein, 1998: p. 178; Martin, 2010: p. 47) see it as an 'ability to complete a task and find a solution in some problem domain'.

According to Pitan and Adedeji (2012) skills are often categorized into two types: transferable and generic skills. They can be used across large numbers of different occupations and vocations in which specific occupational or technical skills are needed to work within an occupation or occupational group. In the same vein, Winterton (2006) averred that a distinction should be made between the general skills, which are essential irrespective of any occupational context or so fundamental as to be considered basic life skills, and skills that are specific to a sector or a particular group of occupations which are only likely to be useful in a specified context or job. This conception of skills is better captured by Kechagias (2011) who emphasized that all skills are learned or are capable of being learnt and developed, and necessarily involve the appropriate (and observable) performance of particular types of activity and task. Skills are behaviours that are carried out when knowledge, aptitudes and personality traits are put into practice. They constitute the corpus of knowledge, procedures, competencies, and aptitudes that are needed to carry out various activities to a certain degree of quality and effectiveness, and independently and flexibly.

### **Roles of Online Learning Space Opportunity for Literacy Education and Skills Acquisition Delivery**

Online learning spaces consist of information and communication technology tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store and manage information. Ratheeswari (2018) reported in his work that "ICT stands for "Information and communication technology". It refers to technologies that provide access to information through telecommunication". "He said it is similar to Information Technology (IT) but focuses primarily on communication technologies". He also observed that the rapid development in technology has made creatively changes in the way we live, as well as the demands of society. Recognizing the impact of new technologies on the workplace and everyday life, today's teacher education institutions try to restructure their education programmes and classroom facilities, to minimize the teaching and learning technology gap between today and the future. ICTs are making dynamic changes in society. They are influencing all aspects of life. The influences are felt more and more at schools. Because ICTs provide both students and teachers with more opportunities in adapting learning and teaching to individual needs, society is, forcing schools aptly respond to this technical innovation (Ratheeswari 2018).

The emergence of ICT has transformed the existence and activities of contemporary man, particularly in the setting of globalization (Evey, et al., 2010). In recent times, there has been extraordinary advocacy both nationally and internationally for the use of ICT in the instructional and learning process (Okoro & Ekpo, 2016). The educational field has been influenced by ICT, which has explicitly influenced instructional processes and research. Davis and Tearle (2014) identified that ICT has the strength to speed up, improve and extend aptitude reforms as it can boost teaching by inspiring and engaging learners, and help schools reform by assisting schools in understanding financial and functional practices. Ashley (2016) reiterates that technology helps educators in preparing students for the real-world setting and stresses that as our countries turn out to be progressively more technology-dependent, it becomes significantly more essential that to be good citizens, students must figure out how to be well informed about ICT. The utilization of ICT in teaching is a pertinent and practical method for providing education to learners that will enrich them with the required abilities in the world of work.

It offers a new and advanced learning environment for learners; consequently, they acquire various aptitude sets to be fruitful and successful. Critical thinking, research and appraisal aptitudes are developing significantly as learners have expanding dimensions of information from several sources to deal with. The incorporation of ICT in the instructional process is believed as a medium in which several methodologies and pedagogical theories might be implemented; however, ICT as a teaching aid is more difficult and multifaceted as it needs a positive attitude from the educators (Salehi & Salehi, 2012).

Besides, the increased importance of ICTs in the developmental process has made it expedient for everybody in all sectors to have a firm knowledge of ICT. Consequently, to compete globally, everyone needs to enhance themselves in the skills in ICTs knowing how to use it to work and communicate effectively and efficiently. Conclusively, ICT is the driving force for effective and efficient education delivery and operation of trade and commerce as well as human capital development (Ospina, 2013).

### **Justification for the Adoption of Online Learning Space Opportunity for Literacy Education and Skills Acquisition Delivery**

In the course of this discourse, it has been established that the educational opportunities in the conventional system are not adequate for the needs of the time. What is required is a system that would provide access to education according to the choice and needs of learners. This, according to Woodman (2003), is possible only if the educational system is productive, flexible and accessible to all categories of people. The traditional system is not able to withstand these demands and challenges because it has not been designed on those lines. Therefore, the adoption of online learning space delivery requires the application of an Open and Distance Learning format

ODL format as a model with its characteristics is capable of meeting the growing demands of the unreached, disadvantaged and neglected prospective learners, and other challenges of education because of its:

1. capacity to provide much desired need-based, work-based and employment-based education to all categories of people by their choice of pace, process, place, priority and programme of learning
2. potential to offer quality-based uniform learning at all levels and standards;
3. recruitment of staff who understand the rudiment ODL and understand the learners
4. develop course materials written in open and distance learning format
5. the unique methodology of teaching/learning through the use of a multi-media system; and
6. Cost-effectiveness in comparison with the conventional system of classroom teaching
7. (Rekkedal, 2003).

Thus, this is in line with Woodman's (2003) submission of the four fundamental aspects of the ODL which he groups as:

1. Access to learning and learning opportunities
2. Access to educational and other academic resources
3. Access to collaborative learning and interactions
4. Access to expertise

Therefore, to keep pace with the worldwide trend in Scientific and technological advancements, continuous innovation, the need for adoption of online learning space opportunities for literacy education and skills acquisition delivery, demands among learners, accessibility through the open distance learning format focus essentially on:

- a. its access and equity;
- b. its linkage with employment and work; and
- c. its relevance to the utilisation of resources and national policies.

To achieve the above potentials of application of ODL format in online learning space opportunity for literacy education and skills acquisition delivery, there is, therefore, the need to take into consideration all aspects of the online learning environment. These include continuous internet bandwidth updates and the use of all online learning tools and social media applications among others.

### **Literacy Education and Skill Acquisition Delivery: The African Experience**

Huitfeldt and Jutting in COL and UNESCO (2017) “report not only that two-thirds of Sub-Saharan Africa’s people are under 25 years of age, but also that up to 90 per cent of employment is in the informal economy”. This has been confirmed by comments in a more recent study by International Labour Organization (ILO, 2015) that “informal employment is the standard condition among most youth in Sub-Saharan Africa” because it is often their only choice for survival and livelihood.

One of the key contributing factors to this problem is that in most African countries, Nigeria inclusive, the formal and non-formal literacy education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system has been losing its ability to provide adequate skills training to enhance the employability of youth and women as well as the opportunity for adult folks and out-of-school children, due to low budgets, inadequate infrastructure, and out-of-date materials and pedagogy (COL and UNESCO 2017, p. 143).

The discourse on the transformation of African literacy education and skills acquisition delivery required to make it more responsive to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century includes the optimistic view that rapid changes in the educational technology landscape and their adoption, not only by teachers but also by entire institutions and national systems, can help address Africa’s highly complex education and skills acquisition challenges. The vision of digital technologies providing equitable access to literacy education, and quality locally TVET programmes, especially for economically and socially excluded communities is one shared by the African Union (2014), Commonwealth of Learning (2010), UNESCO-UNEVOC (2007), Mead Richardson (2011) and many others (COL and UNESCO 2017, p. 143).

### **Recommendations on the Adoption of Online Learning Space Opportunity for Literacy Education and Skills Acquisition Delivery in Nigeria**

Based on the numerous benefits and opportunities embedded in online learning space and challenges in literacy education and skills acquisition delivery in Africa and Nigeria in particular identified above. It is imperative to recommend the adoption of online learning be made possible by NMEC and SAME in collaboration with our distance learning institutions

in the country to create online literacy content and online learning resources for delivery. Below are suggested online learning applications for adoption:

- (1) **Learning Application Platform:** This includes Learning Management System Software such as Blackboard, WebCT, ECollege, ETUDES-NG, Moodle, Edmodo and Angel.
- (2) **Google Application Platform:** The google application platform includes the use of google classroom and googles chrome extensions. Google Classroom has become one of the most popular trends in edtech. With its inherent ability to help teachers organize classrooms, track the usage of files, and control access to documents and related media, Google Classroom is a clean fit for many of today's classrooms. While Google Chrome Extensions are "applications that run inside the Chrome browser and provide additional functionality, integration with third-party websites or services, and customized browsing experiences." While there is some grey area between Google apps, extensions, and simple shortcuts to websites, the right extensions can turn your browser into a Swiss army knife of utility and efficiency. Both applications things simple, more accessible, more visible, more compelling, and more convenient—there are dozens of potential benefits to you in your classroom. Clip a web page to Evernote with a single button push. Look up a reference. Model for students how to add a citation. Send a link to colleagues without opening another tab. Find a useful resource for a lesson. Scoop it. Tweet it. Pin It. Find a post you want to read. Don't email it to yourself—use Pocket.
- (3) **Social Media Application:** Social media gradually has become a vital part of life in the twenty-first century as most people now live their life online due to the increasing trend of social websites and applications. Also, social media are interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interest and other forms of expression through virtual communications and networks. Social media make use of web-based technologies to transform and broadcast literacy content and media monologues into social dialogues like Facebook, yahoo mail, Twitter, WhatsApp, Telegram, YouTube and Tik Tok lite.
- (4) **Mass Media:** The use of mass media is very essential as technology progresses the modern day of accessing media literacy is not limited to the desktop but has been developing into mobile applications and smartphones making the possibility of easy usage by persons or groups of persons. It is, therefore, that the National Mass Education Commission (NMEC) should revisit the use of mass media with the broadcast of literacy content on radio and television.

## **Conclusion**

With the analysis and discussion above, it is clear that the online learning space has been seen as an enabling environment for promoting literacy education and skills acquisition delivery. The advancement in ICT today offers everyone a variety of ways to promote literacy education and skills acquisition through computers, the internet, social media platforms, social networking platforms, and web and mobile applications among others. It is, therefore, imperative for all especially the National Mass Education Commission (NMEC) and State Agency for Mass Education Commission (SAME), government and other stakeholders to work towards the adoption of online learning space opportunities to promote literacy education and skills acquisition delivery in Nigeria.

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