

The Use of ICT in Adult Education

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Introduction:

ICT is a broader term for Information Technology (IT), which refers to all communication technologies, including the internet, wireless networks, cell phones, computers, software, middleware, video-conferencing, social networking, and other media applications and services enabling users to access, retrieve, store, transmit, and manipulate information in a digital form.

ICTs are also used to refer to the convergence of media technology such as audio-visual and telephone networks with computer networks, by means of a unified system of cabling (including signal distribution and management) or link system. However, there is no universally accepted definition of ICTs considering that the concepts, methods and tools involved in ICTs are steadily evolving on an almost daily basis.

To define professional skill levels for its ICT professional education products, the IEEE Computer Society has adopted, for example, the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA). The value of ICT strategies as a means of bridging the digital divide and as a powerful tool for economic and social development around the world should not be underestimated in agricultural and related sectors. Improving extension of ICT services to farmers would effectively improve the transmission of global open data for agriculture and nutrition for development of sensible solutions addressing food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture issues.

By using ICTs, there have already "been diverse types of innovations taking place in the agriculture sector, which include commodity and stock market price information and analysis, meteorological data collection, advisory services to farmers for agricultural extension, early warning systems for disaster prevention and control, financial services, traceability of agricultural products, agricultural statistical data gathering.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education is the mode of education that use information and communications technology to support, enhance, and optimise the

delivery of information. Worldwide research has shown that ICT can lead to an improved student learning and better teaching methods.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) can impact student learning when teachers are digitally literate and understand how to integrate it into curriculum.

Schools use a diverse set of ICT tools to communicate, create, disseminate, store, and manage information. In some contexts, ICT has also become integral to the teaching-learning interaction, through such approaches as replacing chalkboards with interactive digital whiteboards, using students' own smartphones or other devices for learning during class time, and the "flipped classroom" model where students watch lectures at home on the computer and use classroom time for more interactive exercises.

When teachers are digitally literate and trained to use ICT, these approaches can lead to higher order thinking skills, provide creative and individualized options for students to express their understandings, and leave students better prepared to deal with ongoing technological change in society and the workplace.

ICT issues planners must consider include: considering the total cost-benefit equation, supplying and maintaining the requisite infrastructure, and ensuring investments are matched with teacher support and other policies aimed at effective ICT use.

Adult education is expected to address the socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental problems besieging humanity in their various societies. This is so because adults are the major occupants of the production sectors of the economy. Fasakun (2006) observed that adult education is not concerned with preparing people for life but rather with helping or assisting people (adults) to live more successfully as useful and acceptable members of their societies and contribute meaningfully to the development of those societies. As can be seen from the information above, adult education should be re-positioned to excessively launch the present adults into the orbit where they can respond to the challenges brought in by information and communication technology in order to make meaningful contributions to national development.

What are the three main uses of ICT?

- **Communication.** Information can be transmitted from one place to the other with the use of ICT.
- Information Processing and Management
- Timing and Control
- ICT and Society
- ICT and Development of society

ICT allows students to monitor and manage their own learning, think critically and creatively, solve simulated real-world problems, work collaboratively, engage in ethical

decision-making, and adopt a global perspective towards issues and ideas.

Benefits of ICT in Adult Education:

1. Offer opportunities for more adult-learner-centred teaching. There is a common belief that the use of ICT in adult education will contribute to more constructivist learning and an increase in activity and greater responsibility of the adult learner (Volman, 2005).
2. Provide the adult educator with new sources of information and knowledge which will enhance the process of and practices of teaching adults. This is because acquisition of ICT knowledge and skills can help the adult educators to obtain basic knowledge of principles of teaching and learning and the skills to apply those principles in teaching - learning situations.
3. Provide adult learners the opportunity for distance learning country-wide with on-line educational materials even in the face of their tight schedule of activities.
4. Help in providing adult-learners with additional resources to assist resource-based learning e.g., the fax, telephone, computers, e-mail, internet, www (World Wide Web) etc.
5. Broaden access to quality educational services for adults at all levels of adult education.
6. Help in producing ICT literate adults who will be useful to themselves and contribute meaningfully to the society in which they belong.
7. Produce adults who are capable of working and participating in the new economies and societies arising from ICT and related development.
8. Help education policy makers in formulating and execution of educational policies which will be inclusive in nature to bridge the gap in education.
9. Widen the range of opportunities for the marginalized and the disadvantaged members in the society by opening access to knowledge.
10. Encourage self-directed learning because adults can engage in personal learning by using their personal computers or internet connection.
11. Help adult learners to have access to tutorial software.
12. Help in improving the effectiveness and efficiency in the adult education system in Nigeria as a whole. In addition, adult learners can use ICT in business transactions and other human endeavours activities that require ICT for their accomplishment and achievement of goals.

Limitations of ICT use in Adult Education:

ICT as modern technology that simplifies and facilitates human activities is not only advantageous in many respects but also has many limitations. The limitations can be categorized as adult educators related, adult learners' related and technology related. All of them potentially

limit the benefits of ICT to adult education. Adult educators' attitude plays an important role in the teaching learning process that utilizes computers and internet connections. Of course, some adult educators may have positive attitudes to the technology, but refrain from using it in teaching due to low self-efficacy, tendency to consider themselves not qualified to teach with technology. In this respect, Ormrod (2006) defined self-efficacy as the extent or strength of one's belief in one's ability to complete tasks and reach goals. Adult educators' resistance and lack of enthusiasm to use ICT in adult education is also another limitation. Furthermore, many adult educators may not have the required Information and Technology (IT) skills and feel uncomfortable nor do they have training needed to use the technology in their teaching. This is a drawback to adult education curriculum enhancement, ICT teaching - learning process and overall academic success of the adult learners and institution. In this era of global technology, adult educators and adult learners are expected to be at least computer literate, adults in the community to be ICT compliant as well as adult learners. People with disabilities should be equipped with assistive technology skills to be able to operate successfully in their communities (Nnazor, 2015). On the other hand, the limitation of ICT use in adult education is related to adult learners' behaviour. Appropriate use of computers and the internet by adult learners has significant positive effects on adult learners' attitude and their behaviour. Learners tend to misuse the technology for leisure time activities and have less time to learn and study. Yousef and Dahamani (2008) described online gaming, use of facebook, chat rooms and other communication channels as perceived drawbacks of ICT use in adult education because learners easily switch to these sites at the expense of their study. Internet access at home for instance, may be a distraction because of chat rooms and online games, reducing the time spent in learning (Kulik, 1994). For example, while adult learners use the internet, it may confuse them by the multiplicity of information to choose from. As a result, the adult educator spends much time controlling them from websites unrelated to the learning content. The other limitation of ICT use in adult education is technology related. The high cost of technology and maintenance of facilities, high cost of spare parts, virus attacks of software and the computer, interruptions of internet connections and poor supply of electric power are among the technology related limitations of ICTs use in adult education.

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