

THE ROLE OF ANDRAGOGY IN PROMOTING EFFECTIVENESS OF E-LEARNING IN ADULT EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper examined the role of Andragogy in promoting effectiveness of e-learning in adult education. Effective application of the principle of andragogy in e-learning requires an in-depth knowledge on how the adults learn. Gone are the days when the purpose of learning in adult education was merely for the 'transmission of knowledge'. The author suggests that e-learning should include andragogical approaches in their curriculum so that the culture of e-learning would be a major part in the training of the adults. In this paper, the concept of e-learning, its characteristics and model in adult education were highlighted. It went further to discuss the concept of andragogy, and the role of andragogical approaches in the delivery of e-learning in adult education. The paper recommended among others that andragogical approaches should be adopted in e-learning as it is the art and science of helping adults to learn and also that e-learning instructors should always consider their role as facilitators and not presenters of contents.

Keywords: Adult education, E-learning, Andragogy

Introduction

Society is rapidly changing as a result of e- learning or what is called Information Communication Technology (ICT). E-learning has revolutionized the world in all facet of life particularly in education. Adult education which is an aspect of education is not left out. E learning is an integral part in adult education due to the fact that learning is made possible anywhere and at any time and the learners are self- paced. Kerman (2004) stated that e- learning does not need physical attendance and the learners are geographically apart. This type of learning would be much easier for the learners if the principles of andragogy are integrated for better learning outcome in adult education. Adult education according to Ani (2010) means all kinds of learning undertaken by anyone who is an adult. Adult education activity in most cases is designed to serve as a solution response to the fast-changing complex world. Its programmes explore issues relating to challenges of needs, aspirations, interest and conditions of the general populace.

In Nigeria, before the 1914, traditional education system has been existing within the geographical space known today as Nigeria. Kalio (2018) stated that before the introduction of western education in Nigeria, various communities were engaged in informal education processes. The informal education practiced by the traditional Nigerian before the colonization of the country was geared towards developing critical skills, character, culture among others (Kalio, 2018). After some years of European slavery and colonization, western education evolved. The western education in particular brought about some reasonable changes that induced some interest in education.

Indigenous nationalists and elites who partook in the western education culture became more enlightened and experienced in handling their affairs. Agbionu (2014) opined that the knowledge arising from these experiences stimulated nationalist movements and activities as well as kin interest in the education of the adults. The adult nationalists invested in this education, became more enlightened and fought for their freedom from western domination. With this new situation, they could deduce potency in utilizing western education to the achievement of their liberation. Hence, formal system of education which is the western education came to the limelight and became the aspiration of many till today (Agbionu, 2014).

Agbionu buttressed further that the western system of education would succeed in addressing issues from all facets of life as regards people's relative needs and aspirations. But the latest recrudescence in our time and the dynamics in the cosmos generated a strong and vehement resistance to this sole method of education, hence the introduction of alternative in which adult education became imperative. Adedokun (2008) postulated that adult education has the aims of bringing about social transformation and reconstruction of societies to make it modernized, productive, participatory and value oriented. The propelling dynamics underlying the change that induced a thriving focus and interest in adult education as a field of study in Nigeria is as a result of scholars' strong interest in issues of lifelong learning and education for all. To them, adult education is instrumental in the preservation of cultural heritage and socialization processes. It also aims to enhance adult abilities to improve their future job and educational possibilities (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Adult education which is privileged as it is acclaimed to solving many human needs was expected to perform many miracles in eradicating poverty, illiteracy, diseases and sustaining lifelong learning. The efforts of organizations such as: UNDP, UNESCO,

World Bank and many others cannot be left out. Policy Makers in Nigeria and NGOs have realized the importance of adult and non-formal education in national development. In Nigeria, as in many other sister countries, out of the population of about 140 million people about 60 million people are illiterates (Obiozor & Obidiegwu, 2013). As a result of this, different categories of stakeholders and the Federal Government of Nigeria initiated different programmes such as Basic literacy programme, Post literacy programme, Vocational education programme, Continuing education Programme, Extension education, Each- one- teach- one and Fund- the- education- of-one policy to curb illiteracy (FRN Blue Print, 2008). In the aspect of national development, the federal government went a step further to provide community development programmes. They also provided basic literacy programmes like Universal Basic Education (U.B.E) programme which was launched in 1999 for the purpose of eradicating illiteracy from all and sundry.

Despite all these efforts by these stakeholders and the governments, absolute literacy has not been achieved in Nigeria. With all the advancement in technology and its provision to make learning more flexible in control, cost friendly and reduce the instructional duration which are the credit of andragogy; It is unfortunate that research in ICT and e-learning for adult learners have been a handful achievement and sadly a theoretical initiative. This is more despicable and prevalent in developing countries especially in Nigeria where localized resources are limited, text books are often outdated, myopic and strikingly exorbitant and also the funds for developing new research and materials are dismal in supply (Cisco, 2013).

Over the years we have witnessed paradigm shift in educational thought and aspiration with innovative trends and learning reforms in education. It is difficult as well as impossible for the educational system of the medieval age to serve in the present virtual campus of the digital era as there is a shift from the campus-based learning to virtual education. The ever-changing world of technology has given adult education a new direction.

One of the few things that almost everyone will agree on is that online learning is an increasingly viable means of obtaining an education which the society can rely on. Cochrane and Bateman's (2010), found in their study that mobile learning supports collaboration, data and resource capturing as it concerns practice. The online learning tool provides active learning activities which direct the learner to work toward self-discovery. The global world of the internet which brought about this changing condition

being referred to was introduced towards the beginning of the 21st century-the internet age. This changing condition made it mandatory that e-learning be incorporated into adult education and other fields of studies so as to embrace the present trend in on-line environment.

As e-learning is trending and equally tending to be part of the mainstream of adult education because of its flexibility and self-paced orientation, the researcher is of the opinion that adult educators as well as instructors should place less emphasis on acquisition of knowledge and paper certificate in adult education and more on technical skills in online learning environment.

If e-learning in this technology dispensation is to up to the promise of enhancing online learning outcomes, a different paradigm which is andragogy for instructional design and delivery of the content is needed. This paradigm shift would bring about a technological change in the method and curriculum of learning in adult education. This change will make e-learning to lose its isolated character and it will cease to be a neglected affair rather, appear as part and parcel of the whole evolution in adult education, hence, the rationale for the study.

Concept of E- learning

The concept of e-learning has been defined by many authors in different perspectives. According to Bodys (2005), E-learning is a compendium of all forms of electronically supported learning which is procedural in process and aims to impact the necessary knowledge on the learner. It includes the use of ICT as a complement to the traditional classrooms, on-line learning or mixing the two modes.

In the same vein, Otuka (2010) defined E-learning as an aspect of information communication technology (ICT) which comprises all forms of electronically supported learning and teaching which are procedural in nature and aims at construction of knowledge with reference to individual experience and practice. This means that e-learning depends on computers and networks, which will eventually progress into more sophisticated system comprising of variety of channels such as wireless satellites and into technologies like cellular phones.

Allen and Seaman (2003) viewed e-Learning as using electronic applications and software's to learn. The authors further outlined the processes and its content to include web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classroom and digital collaboration. The authors also stated that the content is delivered through the internet,

intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite, television and CD-ROM. This definition pointed out that information and communication system whether network or not, served as a specific media to implement the learning process.

Demiray (2010) buttressed that e-Learning offers many opportunities for individual and institutions all over the world. It delivers knowledge and learning at the learner's self-space and convenience at anywhere and anytime which is an advance feature to the original or what we can call orthodox system of education. Twigg (2002) noted that the e-learning approach is centered on the learner and the design involves interactive system, repetitive and self-paced which can be customizable.

It can therefore be concluded from the above definitions that e-learning encompasses all forms of learning, acquisition of skills and training which is internet-based, satellite – motivated and computer-directed. E-learning makes it possible for an on-the-spot kind of learning through mobile assisted technologies anywhere and at any time. It has the potentials of accelerating the achievement of the Education for All (EFA) initiatives because of the embedded benefits it has which includes: decentralization of knowledge from the all-knowing authority (Facilitator) down to the learners, its dynamism in nature and procedure, its individualized delivery system and its user friendly among others.

Characteristics of E-learning and its Model in Education

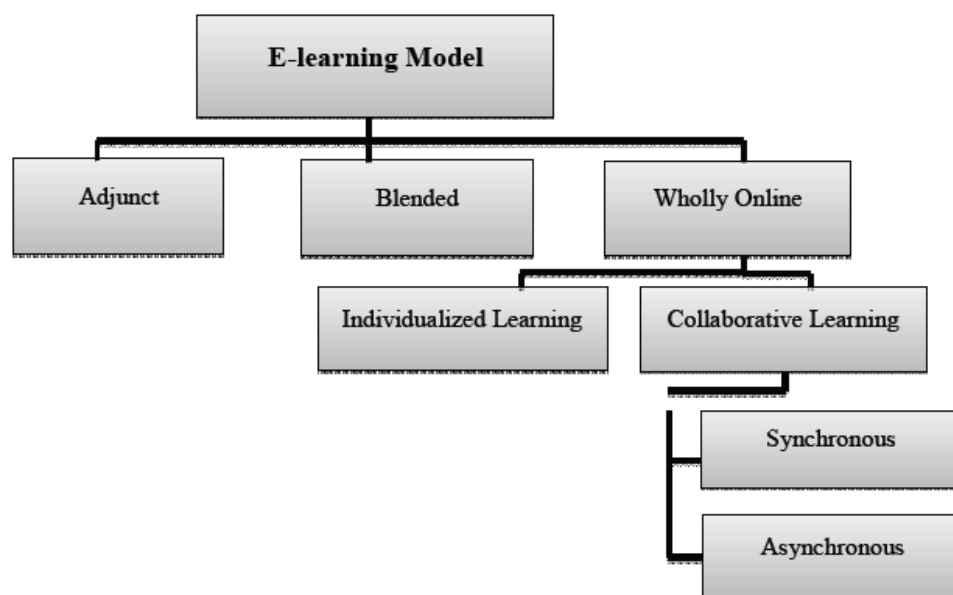
Liaw and Huang (2003) in their literature enumerated the following characteristics of e-learning:

1. Multimedia: E-learning is a multimedia environment. It involves a multiplicity of network combination such as personal computer, internet/email, cell phone/smart phone portable computer connection, computer- based digital information etc.
2. Information bank: E-learning incorporates several kinds of information thereby duplicating appropriate supporting instructional materials for learners.
3. Collaborative platform: E- learning systems supports collaborative communication, whereby users or learners have total control over their own situation of learning.
4. Internet supported learning: E-learning supports networks for accessing information and training, digital books and the capacity of worldwide connection with experts.

5. E- Learning allows for its system to be implemented freely on various kinds of computer operating system. For instance; e-library, You Tube, free on-line learning etc.

Lui and Wang (2009) summarized the aforementioned features as thus: e-learning process are chiefly centered on the internet: global sharing of learning resources, information broadcast and knowledge flow by way of network courses and lastly flexibility of learning as computer-generated environment for learning is created to overcome issues of distance and time.

Conceptual Model for Using E-learning in Adult Education



Source: Adapted from Algahtani (2011)

This model tries to identify the need to incorporate adult education principles in e-learning in order to ameliorate the isolated problem associated with e-learning among adults and the high incidence of online illiteracy in the country. Kaplan (2011) opined that e-learning community comprises of e-training community, online conference community and blended learning communities where members engage in collaborative learning in an online environment. The way adults learn and their characteristics in the learning environment have to be considered and upheld by online instructors and this calls for a re-orientation among online curriculum planners and administrators.

Concept of Andragogy

The first use of the word 'andragogy' was found with the German high school teacher Alexander Kapp in 1833 in a book entitled 'Platos' Erziehungslehre' (Platos educational

ideas) where he describes the lifelong necessity to learn. According to Reischmann (2004), the term andragogy has been used in different times and countries with various connotations. It finds its meaning by contrasting it with pedagogy by arguing that there are important distinctions worth considering when it comes to teaching adults.

Nzeneri (2008) defined andragogy in line with Malcolm Knowles 1970 definition as the art and science of helping adults learn. Knowles definition of andragogy is built upon two defining attributes: first, a conception of learners as self-directed and autonomous, and second, conception of the role of the teacher as a facilitator of learning rather than a presenter of content. (Pratt & Ass., 1998). Andragogy as a theory in adult education is poised to debunk the mere believe of pedagogy which postulates that only the child can engage in learning and also prove that the way an adult learn is different from that of a child.

This concept andragogy is guided and supported by these basic assumptions of the adults in learning situations which include that as human beings mature they:

1. take on varying life tasks, which makes them to depend more on their judgments than that of others.
2. accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.
3. their readiness to learn is increasingly oriented towards developmental tasks of his social roles.
4. their time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediate utilization and accordingly his orientation towards learning shifts from one of subject centeredness to problem-centeredness.
5. motivation to learn becomes intrinsic which is mostly internally derived (Nzeneri, 2008).

On these five principles, rest the concept of andragogy. These principles try to show the focus of andragogical approach, being that the approach is adopted in helping adults to learn. Therefore; any educational programme designed for adults must take into consideration these facts about them if such a programme is to be successful (Agbionu, 2014).

The Role of Andragogy in Promoting Effectiveness of E-Learning in Adult Education

The rapid and incredible advancement in information technology at all spheres of life has brought about the desire for adult education practitioners such as facilitators, community developers, programme planners, evaluators as well as supporters to embrace the new

trend in learning called e-learning which is accompanied with the 21st century. Robertson and John (2004) indicated that ICT technologies and e-learning brings about a new way of learning and teaching and so should be associated with andragogy and real approaches. The question is how do we tailor e-learning to the learning needs of adults? This can effectively be achieved through the following means:

The message of lifelong learning and its potentials in increasing an adult experience, faith in his human spirit, need to know more about life, readiness to learn new information should be technologically assisted. E-learning symbiotic relationship with andragogical assumptions require that with each emerging on- line technology, instructors can consider the implications of the technology on the adult learners. Kaplan (2011) asserted that to create an effective design for collaborative e-learning the online developer must first consider the people or community, group process and technology. This requires the identification of learners' knowledge gaps, selection of the right objectives and assignment of role- play to bridge the existing gap among many others.

The andragogical approach requires learners to decide upon what to learn and how to learn, therefore; the control of knowledge in e-learning processes should be on the learner and the role of the teacher becomes that of a navigator. This view is in line with the first assumption of andragogy (Knowles as cited in Nzeneri, (2008).

In distance learning, online course or materials should always be linked with andragogical approach that promotes autonomy with emphasis on learners' skills and experiences which is central in achieving a practical and inclusive learning approach.

Furthermore, one of the assumptions of andragogy has to do with learners' self-directedness. E-learning instructors should always consider their roles as facilitators and not presenters of contents in order for learners to become self-directed which would help them to continue to learn on their own and also personalize their paths in the way they desire.

The immediate consumption of knowledge to solving an existing problem is another assumption of andragogy. Bearing this in mind, designers and planners of e-learning activities should consider the practicable values of such programmes to solving learner immediate needs (Agbionu, 2014).

Another assumption of andragogy is that the learners come into learning situation with many experiences which can be of benefit to the learning environment. Some may have experiences in some of the online applications, programming or operating systems. Kaplan (2011) asserted that e-learning community comprises of e-training community, online conference community and blended learning communities were members engage in collaborative learning in an online environment. In e-learning, programmes like Web 2.0, social media, online collaborative learning, online conferencing and distance learning, the experiences of the participants which can be inform of suggestions are very necessary in designing and supporting a productive discussion.

However; the reality is that instructors and instructional designers of e-learning contents at most online platforms are poorly trained to deliver online learning content effectively.

The andragogical approach should be applied in online learning as it is the art and science of helping adults to learn. This would help in creating learner generated content that can contribute to development of skills of self-directedness, self-discovery, cognitive and meta- cognitive skill development which answers the clarion call of education for all.

Conclusion

The e- learning tool provides active learning activities built around various conditions that learners work through in a process of self- discovery. If e-learning as an aspect of education in this technology age is to embrace the promise of enhancing online learning outcomes, andragogical approaches as a paradigm for instructional design and delivery of content is needed. It is therefore necessary that andragogical approach which captures the learners experience, need to know, readiness to learn and self- concept of learners as well as immediate application of learning, among others becomes an indispensable paradigm in facilitating learning in e-learning environment.

Recommendations

In line with the above discussions on enhancing the effectiveness of e-learning in adult education, the following recommendations are made:

1. Andragogical approach should be adopted in online learning as it is the art and science of helping adults to learn.
2. E-learning instructors should always consider their roles as facilitators and not presenters of contents in order for learners to become self-directed learners.
3. The immediate consumption of knowledge to solving an existing problem of the learners should be at the forefront of curriculum and course content.

4. Online instructors and instructional designers of e-learning contents should undergo periodic training to enhance performance so as to deliver online learning content more effectively.

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