Globalization And Nigerian Educational System: Opportunities And Challenges

David A. Olaniyan,
Department of Educational Management,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

&

Olabanji E. Obadara,
Department of Educational Management,
Tai Solarin University of Education,
Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Abstract

The social, political, economic and technological changes in the world today (globalization) have revolutionized education, calling for radical changes to meet the current demands of the society. Internet is a window to the world; it opens a vast store of information and communications. Connectivity has become important as building a new school for community advancement. This paper therefore discusses the challenges and opportunities of globalization through application of information and communication technologies to Nigerian Educational system. It is concluded that schools and universities should integrate new technologies into their teaching methods. Teachers and students also should learn how to use and integrate the new technologies and they should be encouraged to develop curiosity in them.

Introduction

Globalization has been a celebrated concept since the turn of 21st century. As an abstract concept, concretizing its definitions is somehow difficult. It is a new phenomenon and multi-dimensional but dimly understood. It affects all facets of life universally - science and technology, culture, economic, environmental, social and political. It is applied to all aspects of human discipline. In its broadest sense, globalization refers to the existence or relations between the different regions of the world and the reciprocal influence that societies exert upon one another. According to Marwa (1999) globalization is the latest technological effort in reducing the physical distance among nations and societies of the world through information transfer at speed that is hitherto unknown in information technology. Globalization involves a new consciousness of the world as a single place; the world is hence described as a 'global village'. It has been described as "the concrete structuration of the world as a whole that is, a glowing awareness at a global level that the world is a continuously constructed environment (Marshall, 1998). The world has therefore become borderless taking into cognizance the flow of information through modern technologies.

It is pertinent to state that a central component and the major fuelling-force behind globalization is information and communication technology. In similar vein, it has been contended, and with much justification, that the current worldwide infrastructure driving force is information technology, empowered by those who control capital. We live in a continuously shifting state of realities in which the only predictable constant is the inevitability of more change. This is the basic element of our Information Technology Era,
which commenced with the development of the microprocessor in 1973 and proceeds into the foreseeable future. With the increasing capacity of information and communication technologies, there is a rise in new learning opportunities beyond the traditional "book-teacher" model. Globally, the nature of learning and teaching is changing rapidly due, in part, to increasing interaction from more accessible global telecommunication networks driven by the content of the Internet. New options for distance education are driving the shift from traditional learning communities (schools, universities and colleges) towards unrestricted lifelong learning possibilities. The shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered learning means that teachers at all levels need to embrace new information and communication technologies and education and training need to keep up with the advances of new technologies. As new technology is being accepted as the catalyst for new learning environments, access to communication has become crucial. Access to communication and information is indeed a fundamental human right. Undoubtedly, this is not an easy task in developing countries like Nigeria. The challenges to access to information and communication are tremendous.

According to Castells (1996), a substantive progress in implementation of information and communications and for that matter progress in quality of life and development cannot be achieved without preparing people for a knowledge society. This partially involves making an environment amenable for using computers in schools training the population in computer application and a building solid national computer and communication science education. Advanced university training in computer communication systems, computer systems, information science, parallel and distributed systems, software engineering, simulation techniques and tools, telecommunication systems, creation of campus and nationwide network and information systems in education have no substitute for national development. This paper therefore discusses some key opportunities and challenges of globalization of education in Nigeria.

- **Strive to eradicate illiteracy and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide:**

  (a) free, compulsory and universal primary education;

  (b) free secondary education;

  (c) free university education, and

  (d) free adult literacy programme.

- **Promote the learning of indigenous languages.**

  From the efficiency point of view, decision-makers are required to ensure quality education and better job prospects, based on future workforce requirements of the economy. Well-educated, well-trained, motivated workers can produce high-quality goods and services at low cost, enhance productivity and competitiveness, and sustain high living standards. However, striking a balance between educational efficiency and social and political pressure is not that easy. The consequence of political and social pressure on education in Nigeria has led to a declining quality. Under the pressure to educate all and at the expense of limited financial resources, many schools have continued to operate badly managed infrastructure, low quality standards in teaching and learning - resulting in ineffective and
often less motivated workforce. As this conflict between public access to education and need for efficiency deepens, the gap between quantity and quality will continue to widen. Unless all stakeholders take actions, Nigeria will continue to suffer from such a vicious circle. This vicious circle is characterized by low numbers of qualified teachers and large numbers of students per class inaccessibility and inflexibility of schools and universities; outdated and irrelevant curricula and lack of quality educational materials.

**Challenges of Globalization of Education**

Education, being viewed from different perspectives is full of challenges, be it social, political, or efficiency point of view. The stakeholders in nation's educational system are faced by the conflicting political and social objectives. In accordance with the provision of Nigerian Constitution of 1989 Section 19, the Government (decision-makers) shall:

- Direct its policy toward ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.
- Promote science and technology

Already there are symptoms of lack of innovativeness in the current educational system. Schools and universities have remained conservative institutions slow to adopt new practice and technology. They have remained less responsive to actual needs of the society. The education system is largely textbook driven. Absorption of textbook contents tends to be the measure of educational success. Teachers and instructors use "chalk and talk" to convey information. Students have remained bucket recipients of instruction rather than active participants in learning. Obviously, these cannot be problem solvers or troubleshooters in a real life. There is limited link among schoolteachers except in a few cases. Although distance learning tools such as radios and television have been introduced, these have not been used effectively. There is virtually no school with an elaborate network in the country - computers have not been used by over half of the countries' students.

Information and communication technologies have a major role not only in improving existing learning but also extending opportunities for lifelong learning. In Nigeria, and many other countries in Africa, there are few opportunities for second chances, and learning is conceived of as a discrete activity that one engages in only during the early years of life. Very little provision exists for lifelong learning opportunities. Many learners are not reached by the system. Today, there are 900 million illiterates in the world and 130 million children unable to attend primary school. Their access to education is limited by time and space, age, socio-cultural environment, work schedules and physical or mental handicaps (UNCSTD working group on information technology and development, 1996). Information and communications opportunities for students to broaden their learning skills and for teachers to develop better multimedia and interactive courseware. Studies indicate that learning takes place through communication. This is generally poor in the classroom model. Classroom models are largely "one-way teaching models" in which the teacher plays the acting part whereas pupils and students are merely reacting. Computer assisted instructions can greatly complement traditional teaching techniques to help students to learn much more much faster.

(b) **Access to information and communication via the Internet / Intranet**
Internet and Intranet have become a source of vast amount of information and interactive tools. Intranet is a closed user-group Internet. An example of Intranet could be a school campus network where students and teachers share local information such as teaching materials and course schedules while at the same time accessing the Internet. The Internet is a set of linked computers characterized by protocols used across a wide-range of hardware platforms. Each machine on the Internet contains information shared across the globe - (the content of Intranet is only available to a small closed community such as schoolteachers and students). Information on the Internet could be accessible from any location regardless of the type of computer system being used. It also means one can have access to and/or publish information regardless of the subject, location, age, race and time limitation. Internet is thus an empowering tool for all that are involved in education. A wide array of techniques have been developed to access to information on the Internet ranging from logging onto a remote server, chatting over the Internet with colleagues on specific subjects, sharing information via mailing lists and user groups, file transfer protocol to get files on servers to the World Wide Web - an interactive multimedia based information access tool.

The World Wide Web has now gained the momentum due to its ease of use and its multimedia capability. Other techniques have also been developed to work for those that do not have access to the Internet. One of such techniques is the use of "offline browsers" whereby the valuable information on the internet is downloaded on high capacity storage media such as Digital Video Disk (DVD) and distributed to remote schools. The Internet is accessible in around 150 countries of the world (Lishan, 1997). However, the Internet is under-utilized for education in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular except by researchers at university level. The key obstacle is lack of adequate communication infrastructure throughout the country. Lack of resources, fear, apathy, lack of encouragement and ignorance are other significant impediments.

(c) Education Management Information System (EMIS)

Education Management Information System (EMIS/or EDMIS) is a multi-user, interactive information system and a planning tool for storing and retrieving education information on students, student grades, test results, courses, personnel, finances at school, district or regional levels. Student information such as demographics and attendance, subject, program, and performance, staff information such as demographics, employment related data, classroom schedule, vocational education course taken by the staff and staff performance report could be gathered in a standard format and entered at school, district and national level to inform decision-making. The EMIS financial data include information on budgets, cash balances, expenditures, receipts, schedule of indebtedness and miscellaneous financial reports for higher-level management and others such as building profile information.

Although it has been in use elsewhere in developed world, EMIS use in developing countries is often limited to students' affairs office in the Universities and offices of the Ministries of Education. Data on education planning is usually gathered using manual techniques and is often prone to errors and inconsistency.

At school level, EDMIS could allow its users to schedule educational events, notify key personnel/or organizations of the events and ultimate outcomes, print a calendar of events, and schedule counseling sessions for classes. EDMIS provides education staff members with a standard set of reports that can be used for managing education activities or reporting to installation or external organizations. Staff members can also perform standard and special purpose (ad hoc) queries to obtain data not available through existing functions. Coupled
with office automation and networks EMIS promises efficient allocation of resources and centralized planning as well as resources management at national level. The application of computer as a tool for communication and problem solving in schools would provide schools to see its continuous impact on education and day to day activities of the staff.

(d) Information and communication support for distance education and lifelong learning

Information and communication technology support to distance and lifelong learning is one of the most exciting opportunities to developing countries (including Nigeria) that face two major challenges. These countries are facing a socio-political demand for access from larger cohorts of school leavers, and from population groups and social classes largely excluded from higher education and a socioeconomic demand for highly trained human resources with wider ranges of skills and competencies. A quick observation shows that the majority of the workforce in the country is ineffective partially due to lack of up to date training, refreshment and inability to keeping up with new developments in their areas of expertise. At extreme some "experts" have not touched or read books or articles ever since they left schools or colleges. The problem of lack of refreshment is severe especially in decision making process where middle and senior management have not been able to keep abreast with new developments in their fields or other related areas.

Knowledge doubles itself faster than the capacity of an average person. Human understanding of the area gets outdated within 2-5 years if this has not been refreshed continuously - thus it is clear that Nigeria has one of the most exciting opportunities in using information and communication technology for distance and lifelong learning. In the face of limited resources and time, distance education seems the only alternative for bridging the knowledge gap of the workforce that has limited time and convenience. Data in the most developed countries show that only two out of five college students fit the traditional learning profile (Palmer, 1996). Problems facing the spread of distance education in developing countries are not technical but rather political and administrative. Distance education faces a number of difficulties such as, money, staff, equipment and time. Also it focus a number of underlying problems such as resistance to distance education by educators, different learner characteristics and needs, the influence of media upon the instructional process, equity of access to interactive education delivery systems, and the new roles of teacher, site facilitator, and students. Due to these aforementioned problems, it is doubtful if the distance learning programme and the newly established Open University in Nigeria would be able to achieve the above stated objectives of distance education. Another concern of distance educators is the economic standards of learners. Most learners cannot afford new tools and technologies such as computers and telephones. These tools are not accessible to students in remote areas. However, community-centered broadcast technologies such as digital radios and low cost computer mediated communications such as the Internet and World Wide Web, are opening new opportunities for distance education to reach students at a distance and also to serve students who need flexibility. Compression technologies combined with improved computer speeds at reduced costs are making interactive, multimedia instruction readily available to the desktop. Internet access (the WWW) has become the most popular media for distance education. Telephone-based audio-conferencing; video-conferencing with one or two-way video and two-way audio broadcast using cable, telephone, fiber optics, satellite, microwave and closed-circuit or low power television are around as menu of choices for distance education planners.
Conclusion

Networking is here to stay and education has no choice but embrace it. This is a time to strike a balance between opportunities provided by globalization (information and communication technology) to education and its challenges. It is time to pay price for education and connectivity. It is also highly imperative that the teachers and the students should learn how to use and integrate the new technologies, and they should be encouraged to develop curiosity in them. Though, the cost of these information and communication technologies are exorbitant, the cost of not using them in education is by far higher because denial of access to information, communications and innovativeness. It means keeping the next generation in the same cycle of poverty, and ignorance. It also means losing one of the easiest ways of supporting employment.

REFERENCES


Palmer, R. et al. (1996). Speech Communication Technology: Research and essays about communication education. Directions in Distance Education. University of Missouri.