
ICT AND SUSTAINABLE HISTORY LEARNING IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

LAZARUS LUKA MAIGORO, Ph.D

Department of Arts Education,
Faculty of Education
University of Jos, Nigeria

NANCHIN FREEDA SHAMMAH

Nasarawa State Polytechnic
Nasarawa State, Nigeria

EDWARD ILIYA NYAMLA

AND

MICAH DOS GOCHIN

Department of Arts Education,
Faculty of Education
University of Jos, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The article is on the place of ICT for sustainable history learning in Nigerian secondary schools. The purpose was to identify the various ways the application of ICT in the learning of history could lead to sustainable improvement in the learning of history for better output by history students in Nigerian secondary schools. The various ICT tools that could be used by history students to learn, discussed in this article are radios, televisions, computers and the internet while some of the constraints to their effective use are poor educational financing, low ICT literacy among students and lecturers of history, and epileptic power supply. The write up discussed the benefits of ICT to sustainable learning of history contents to include: tool for educational transformation and reform, helping in expanding access to education, strengthening the relevance of education to the increasingly digital workplace, and raising educational quality by turning teaching and learning into an engaging, active process connected to real life, among others. The study recommended that ICT should be included as part of the history curriculum, schools should strive and provide workable ICT platforms to enable easy access to ICT facilities so as to enhance sustainable learning of history as a discipline in schools.

KEYWORDS: History, Learning, ICT, Sustainable development, Access to education, Arts education, Education

INTRODUCTION

The world has so far undergone three phases in its socio-economic development. The first phase was the agricultural revolution, the second was industrial revolution and the third phase is the current information technology revolution, (Kosongo, 1993). Information Communication Technology (ICT) has become, within a very short time, one of the basic building blocks of modern society.

In Watson's (2001) description, ICTs have revolutionized the way people work today and is now transforming secondary education systems. As a result, if schools train children in yesterday's skills and technologies, they may not be effective and fit in tomorrow's world. This is sufficient reason for ICTs to win global recognition and attention. For instance, ICTs are dependable tools in facilitating the attainment of one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which is achievement of universal education by the year 2015. This indicates the growing demand and increasingly prominent place that ICTs could receive in education and the society. Since ICTs provide greater opportunity for history students and teachers to adjust learning and teaching to individual needs, society is forcing schools to give appropriate response to this technical innovation.

THE CONCEPT OF ICT

According to United Nations Report (1999), ICTs cover internet service provision, telecommunications equipment and services, information technology equipment and services, media and broadcasting, libraries and documentation centres, commercial information providers, network-based information services, and other related information and communication activities.

ICT stands for Information and Communication Technologies and is defined, as a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information. ICT implies the technology which consists of electronic devices and associated human interactive materials that enable the user to employ them for a wide range of teaching - learning processes in addition to personal use. These technologies include computers, the internet, broadcasting technologies (radio and television), and telephony. ICT is that technology which uses information to meet human needs or purposes including processing and exchanging knowledge. When these technologies are applied in the field of education, it is termed ICT education. Information and communication technologies, are seen as the driving force of globalization and new forms of connectivity that enhances sustainable history instruction in secondary schools in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUALIZING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Brundtland Commission of 1987 briefly defined sustainable development as the ability to make development sustainable—to ensure that it meets the needs of the

present without compromising the ability of future generations, (Cerin, 2006; Dernbach, 1998; Dernbach, 2003; Stoddart, 2011). On development, the report states that human needs are basic and essential; that economic growth—which is equity to share resources with the poor—is required to sustain them; and that equity is encouraged by effective citizen participation.

From this definition, there are three distinct ideas about what should be developed: people, economy, and society. Much of the early literatures focused on economic development, with productive sectors providing employment, desired consumption, and wealth. More recently, attention has shifted to human development, including an emphasis on values and goals, such as increased life expectancy, education, equity, and opportunity. Finally, the Board on Sustainable Development also identified calls to develop societies that emphasized the values of security and well-being of national states, regions, and institutions as well as the social capital of relationships and community ties. There was ready agreement in the literature that sustainable development implies linking what is to be sustained with what is to be developed, but here, too, the emphasis has often differed from extremes of “sustain only” to “develop mostly” to various forms of “and/or.” Similarly, the time period of concern, ambiguously described in the standard definition as now and in the future, has differed widely. It has been defined from as little as a generation—when almost everything is sustainable—to forever—when surely nothing is sustainable.

THE NECESSITY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA

There are developments in the Nigerian education sector which indicate some level of ICT application in Nigerian schools. The Federal Government of Nigeria, in The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2010), recognizes the prominent role of ICT in the modern world, and has integrated ICT into education. To actualize the ICT goal, The National Policy on Education (NPE) states that government will provide basic infrastructure and training at the primary school. At the basic school, computer education has been made a pre-vocational elective, and is a vocational infrastructure and training for the integration of ICT in the school system.

It should be noted that the 2004 attempt was not the first effort the Nigerian government made to introduce computer education in schools. In 1988, the Nigerian government enacted a policy on computer education. The plan was to establish pilot schools and diffuse computer education innovation first to all secondary and tertiary schools, and then to primary schools. Unfortunately, the project did not really take off beyond the distribution and installation of personal computers (Okebukola, in Aduwa-Ogiegbaen & Iyamu, 2008).

Okebukola in Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Iyamu (2008) concludes that the computer is not part of classroom technology in more than 90 percent of Nigerian public schools. This implies that the chalkboard and textbook continue to dominate classroom activities in most Nigerian schools. In an attempt to address this situation, the Federal Ministry of Education has launched an ICT-driven project known as School Nct (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2010), which is intended to equip all schools in Nigeria with computers and communications technologies.

Fanon (1980) said each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission and fulfil it or betray it. Against the backdrop of this assertion, Nigerians must rise to their responsibility of developing Nigeria to a greater height. Like earlier mentioned, Nigeria is fundamentally be-devilled with problems of unity, managerial inability, ethnic imbalancing in the form of federal character, zoning, geographical spread, creation of more states and local governments areas, etc. Successive Nigerian governments have failed to solve any of these problems. However, national development can only be attained when all the common values, beliefs, and consciousness that will facilitate a sense of belonging are internalized and institutionalized (Odey, 2004). Nigerians should embark on some basic centripetal forces that are capable of developing the country. There must be a measure of reciprocated harmony in the system. This is to say that ethnic regions should be prepared to engage in some level of interdependency whereby a region appreciates the potential of the other and is prepared to depend on such in areas of need. There must be strict observance of social justice, integrity, discipline and goodness. These are essential ingredients of national development. When a nation lacks these ingredients, it shall loom in the backwaters of progress.

ICT AND SUSTAINABLE HISTORY SECONDARY INSTRUCTION IN NIGERIA

The way and manner that ICT has affected the idea of sustainable teaching and learning of history in Nigerian secondary schools leaves much to be desired. Watson (2001) posits that ICT brings changes in the way information is taught and learned. This has created a situation where historical pedagogy could both occur in a virtual as well as physical environment where students could access materials from their teachers and available web sites in what is regarded as digital history. (O'Brien & Grill 2006). This could be done in the following ways:

Change in History Learning Styles: De Landshere (1991) observed that "ICT particularly impacts on course content, teaching methodology and the training and recruitment of staff:" while Dertouzos (1998) added that ICT offers a fantastic learning methodology where students can experience the consequences of action in a virtual environment. Hills (1999) on the other hand sees ICT as becoming a content of education and thus, he who must learn well, must equally learn how to use it.

Garson (2000) calls it an interactive, individualized, flexible, accessible and computer mediated learning which will displace campus based learning. ICT is introducing new ways of teaching to history students and those who are skilled and willing to integrate it in their history learning activities will excel. In this regard, ICT is seen as improving the educational experience of students not only because of the media inherent in it but largely due to the fact that a history student is required to think literally and systematically in order to enable him analyse situations critically.

Easy Access To History Materials And Services: Niedereman and Rollier (2001) averred that assignments could be given to students and equally submitted without necessarily being in the classroom thereby negating the necessity of being at a particular place i.e classroom ,before learning can take place.Changes to accessing information, materials and services in schools by both teachers and students, means that thousands of online journals and books are made available which could be accessed through the internet without solely relying on only what the teacher can provide. The question of students' access is an empowering one which requires secondary school students to develop the culture of ICT benefits to developing their personality and their learning strategies by the perceived wealth of information on the internet waiting to be tapped by them.

Changes History Learning Method: ICT could alter the way history learning methods occur at the university level due to the availability of large data base information which could fundamentally change education; learners could then create and collaborate in terms of access and construction of history information. Complementing this view, Kapitzke (2000) averred that learners or young people can now have an input into educational change. At the university level where history students are expected to be self creators of knowledge, the determined ones who engage the use of ICT will effectively build their own theories and ideologies on issues without swallowing everything the teacher teaches them as the ultimate knowledge. This is possible due to the vast array of information at their finger tips while all they need from the teacher is guidance. Watson (2001) also opined that, the increased access to huge data means that students require help in selecting, evaluating and analysing information as well as determining the currency, validity and veracity of the information to enable them maximize its use.

CHALLENGES OF ICT FOR HISTORY LEARNING

As good as the use of ICT is for learning history in schools, there are bottlenecks towards its effective usage in Nigeria. These include:

Equipment Cost: One of the major bottlenecks to the implementation of the use of ICT facilities by history teachers in secondary schools in Nigeria revolves around the issue of the cost of acquiring these ICT facilities. This is largely attributed to the

problem of inadequate funding of ICT policies. In a country like Nigeria with a seeming floundering economy and a worrisome devalued currency, the cost of obtaining the required ICT tools for effective instruction by history teachers could be too tasking. Sometimes it is not even the cost of purchasing the ICT equipment that constitutes the problem to its use but what Itegboje and Okubote (2002) referred to as lack of will by governments at the various levels to implement their ICT policies.

Lack of Qualified Personnel: Where there is adequate funding for ICT facilities to be procured, the next issue that presents itself is the availability of staff to man the equipment. Liverpool (2001) asserts that while ICT has invaded and dominated institutions in the developed world, its incursion into institutions in Africa and Nigeria in particular has been painfully slow. It is evident that most secondary schools lack qualified personnel or ICT literate teachers and experts who would manage internet connectivity and integrate the internet/computing into the teaching-learning experience. This view was corroborated by Kwache (2007)'s assertion that ICT integration for pedagogy in Africa is low. In a situation where this looming problem happens to be the order of the day, the history teacher will find himself incapacitated to operate the gadgets in order to enhance the quality of his instruction despite its indispensability for effective instruction in the 21st century.

Cultural Persistence: The educational system over the years has developed its own formal ways of executing its educational programmes such as using the blackboard and chalk, sitting in the classroom while learning takes place, wearing of uniforms, a demarcated area called a school with infrastructures. However, the era of ICT is prompting a change to these culturally acceptable stereotypes in schools the world over. In this new dimension, a lot of things have changed in the classroom with computers or televisions replacing the blackboard thereby breaking the strict culture that held sway in most educational environments. This has led to what Connick (1997) calls a new educational culture due to rapid increase in quality as a result of technology.

Poor Infrastructure: The deficiencies in infrastructure and facilities in Nigeria's educational institutions is posing serious nightmare to the use of ICT by teachers. Electricity is one of the important infrastructural facility that the computer, projector and internet, for instance work with. However, for almost fifteen years now, as observed by Ogiegbaen and Iyamu (2005), the country has been reeling under the yoke of power interruptions, outages, black outs which have rendered equipment using electric power supply to function almost redundant. The efforts of successive Nigerian governments to provide stable power supply over the years have not been successful. In this regard, there is hardly any part of the country that enjoys 24 hours electric supply. There are moments where gadgets like refrigerators, televisions, radios, computers got destroyed due to power fluctuations. This implies that even

when power is available, there is no possibility that it will not go off at any time.

Lack of Access to ICT Equipment: Poor access to ICT equipment or accessories in secondary schools and at personal levels due to location of most cyber cafes, tend to hinder their utilization by students for the learning of history. Although investing in ICT for education is cost intensive, the overall cost of establishing ICT facilities in universities in the study area has remained very high. Thus, it is logical to say that investment in ICT in secondary schools require long term planning to explore financial opportunities and training that should take into account sustainability and the developments that ICT enhanced education may bring forth (Sayed 2003). The unavailability of ICT accessories in most schools especially in Nigeria is a major reason why most history teachers and students continue dragging their feet over its integration in their history lessons. For instance, a history student who wishes to learn using the campus intra-net, or a closed circuit television and does not have access to these facilities gets frustrated and drops the idea of using it because he cannot use what he does not have.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. The Nigerian government should ensure the steady supply of electric power since ICT equipment require power to function effectively.
- ii. Training of staff on ICT should be taken seriously by school administrators, government agencies and individual staff to ensure effective usage of the facilities.
- iii. Government and school authorities should provide ICT equipment in schools so as to encourage staff to learn how to use them.
- iv. Technical staff who are versatile with ICT equipment should be employed and deployed to schools in order to maintain existing and available ICT facilities.

CONCLUSION

The use of ICT in the contemporary global community for development in every sphere of endeavour is inevitable. In the education aspect, it has transformed the way and manner instruction is being carried out from both the perspective of the teacher and the student. In history pedagogy, it has championed the cause of effective history instruction and development of the discipline through storage of information, access to information and knowledge, etc. Thus, history teachers and students are encouraged to adopt the use of ICT to develop and sustain learning activities.

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