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## **Place of Online Education in Human Development in Nigeria: An Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Education remains an essential tool in the development of homo-sapiens and nations in general. Through it, people develop their abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which elicit positive value to the society they live in. Thus, in order to actualize education in people, different modes of learning have been brought to the fore; one of which is online education. Interestingly, online education has been in existence for almost two centuries, but has not been well known in Nigeria and other developing countries of the world. Being a mode of education that is practiced online, through the use of Information and Communication Technology and internet, which brings both the teacher and learners from different places together, without any physical boundary/contact (at least 75%), it has helped immensely in human development in countries where it has been practiced. Especially in times like this, where mobility of persons from one place to another has become cumbersome; coupled with different security and economic challenges, this mode of education needs to be seriously considered. It is also a welcome development owing to its essential benefits such as exposure to digital learning, having access to unending works of great philosophers and educationists such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle among others; and the facilitation of uninterrupted learning for class promotion and graduation of students. Developing the learners all round is part of human development which helps in developing the nation. These and many more are some benefits online education offers, which makes it very relevant in our contemporary society.

## **Introduction**

The need for online education has never been more felt in Nigeria than now; especially with the recent COVID- 19 experience that shook the entire world. While it is not a new concept in developed countries, it is a big thing in most developing countries. These latter countries have been content with the traditional “face to face” form of education; citing different excuses such as dearth of ICT facilities in our schools and environment. However, with the shutting down of schools for several weeks and months in a bid to curtail the spread of COVID- 19, leaders of world countries strongly recommended online education for schools so that their education system will not collapse. This pragmatic approach also aligns with Heraclitus postulation that the world is constantly changing and the only thing that does not change is change itself.

This approach is also in line with Nigeria’s philosophy of education and objectives which according to Oputa<sup>1</sup> thus states:

### **a) Nigeria’s Philosophy of Education**

- i. Education is an instrument for national development; to this end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development, and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education;
- ii. Education fosters the worth and development of the individual, for each individual’s sake, and for the general development of the society.
- iii. Every Nigeria child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability;
- iv. There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria; to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive; while interest and ability should determine the individual’s direction in education.

### **b) Its educational objectives**

1. To inculcate national consciousness and unity.
2. To inculcate right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.
4. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities, and competences-both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

Thus, trying to be pragmatic requires the above education philosophy and objectives as they have been stated. This has to be achieved.

In Nigeria, just like in many other developing countries, directives were given by government in the face of the recent COVID – 19 experience, that educational institutions should make use of online education. Consequently, school authorities commenced a hurriedly and unprepared process of utilizing online education; especially the few schools with online facilities. Others who managed to join, had to improvise; some partnering with recognized ICT firms /

companies and business centers. Those schools that could not join suffered terribly while some are gradually building their online technology. Early benefits thus of online education include exposure to digital learning, access to unlimited works/records of great philosophers/educators such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle as well as facilitation of uninterrupted learning for class promotion and graduation of students.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Meaning of Online Education**

Online education is a mode or an aspect of learning that is done online. It is a form of teaching and learning process which requires computer and internet facilities; a situation where the classroom is presented in a non-physical form but online; where the teacher teaches his students from any part of the globe without any physical barrier or boundary,<sup>3</sup> using either synchronous education (live instruction occurring at a set time on weekly basis which students are required to log into at the same time) or asynchronous education (students log in / access and complete lectures, meetings, homework and other learning materials at their pace / schedule within a given time frame, usually a week or two) means. It assists in spreading education globally and prepares students for a variety of career in different fields.

According to Igi – Global<sup>4</sup>, online education has been defined / analyzed differently, such as:

- i. Online education is an educational experience that does not have physical boundary and allows for students to participate in classes and interact with peers from different locations.
- ii. Online education is teaching a class totally or partially through internet and online course management tools;
- iii. Online education is distance education primarily delivered online;
- iv. Online education is post- secondary education of various disciplines that occurs in digital environments whether asynchronous or synchronous, fully online or hybrid.
- v. Online education is a learning context in which most, if not all learning take place online.
- vi. Online education refers to instructional activities or programmes that were delivered over the world wide web.
- vii. It is a type of distance learning without attending a physical institution; in which students and teachers interact over the internet.
- viii. It is learning that takes place electronically and relies on the internet to provide new information or experiences for participants.
- ix. It is the facilitation of a class which was designed for delivery through a completely online modality; and involves extensive planning over a period of time which may be months or years.
- x. It is a dynamic learning format taught by means of the internet in which learners and instructors interact through the use of several technologies for the purpose of intentional

learning.

- xi. It is the act of teaching and learning over the internet characterized by the physical separation of teachers and learners; the influence of an educational organization and the bi - directional flow of information between students and instructors. They are typically supported by learning management systems such as blackboard or moodle.
- xii. It refers to courses and programmes that are offered digitally (web- based); designed specifically for web- based delivery for self – directed, self – motivated learners; offers flexibility and convenience for learners with obligations that create barriers to traditional class schedules.
- xiii. It differs from traditional classroom teaching in two essential elements: (a) physical distance and (b) time; allowing the learner more flexibility. The most basic form is to deliver syllabi lecture notes, reading materials and assignments via the internet. Higher levels of teaching and learning can take computer conference facilities, a help desk, linkage of conferencing and web page assignment, testing and course management tools as well as evaluation.
- xiv. It is a learning context in which most, if not all learning take place online.
- xv. It means web- based course work in which at least 75% of course content is delivered online.
- xvi. It is a learning environment created using the web and accessed through the computer. Classes are conducted using the internet as the delivery method rather than a traditional brick – and - mortar classroom setting.
- xvii. Online education is a course format where students and instructors correspond and interact using virtual methods such as email, web conferencing and learning management systems; and are delivered asynchronously.
- xviii. It is an electronically supported learning that relies primary on the internet and digital platforms for teacher/student interaction and the distribution of essential syllabus materials.
- xix. It is teaching and learning mediated by computer – based technology that features differences on how learners can have control over time, place, medium or place of instruction.
- xx. It implies credit – granting courses or education training delivered primarily via the internet to students at remote locations including their homes; which may be done synchronously or asynchronously.

Furthermore, online education which has been in existence for close to two centuries is a concept for teaching and learning online with the help of technology tools and platforms.<sup>5,6</sup> Its success is dependent on factors such as good internet connections, learning software, ICT, digital skills availability and access to technology, power and so on; and takes its roots from

distance education as well as the emergence of digital technologies that promote the efficient delivery of lectures, virtual classroom sessions and other instructional materials and activities through the internet. According to McGowan,<sup>7</sup> online education platforms are essential tools that facilitate inclusive education. Hence, with the great awareness of the internet and mobile technologies across the globe; online education platforms can be maximized to bridge the educational gaps around us; thus minimizing the rate of global illiteracy.

### **Online Education Tools/Platforms One Can Consult**

There are broad ranges of online education tools/ platforms that enhance online education. These, according to John in Onyema, Obafemi, Sen and Sharma<sup>8</sup> include: Go to Meeting. com, Skype.com, Google Classroom / Open Online education (edu. google.com), Youtube.com, Blackbaord.com, udey.com, coursera.org, memory.com, alison.com, edx.org, easycass.com and vedamo.com. They further include Kahanacademy. org, TED-Ed (ed.ted.com), Codeacademy.com, Stanford Online (Online.stanford.ed), futurelearn.com, reampus.com, learnopia.com, Peer 2 Peer University (p2pu.org), Teachers pay Teachers (teacherspayteachers.com), Thinkific (thinkific.com), MOOC.org, openculture.com, and academicearth.org. They also include itunes U Free courses (apps. apple.com), lessonpaths.com, memrise.com, funbrain.com (for kids), whyville.net (for teens), Edmodo (edmodo.com), schoology (schoology.com), classdojo (classdojo.com) and google hangouts (hangouts.google.com). Likewise included are Twitter, Instagram, Zoom (zoom.us), Whatsapp.com and Facebook among others. The last three online platforms shall further be treated:

#### **a. Zoom**

Zoom construes an online platform which is used to convert massive amounts of data into easily discernable shapes and colours as well as for envisioning things that are too small or big, or that are too far away or simply out of sight.<sup>9</sup> It helps in giving additional meaning to words and is further described as a picture worth a thousand words. In the design process, zoom enables exchanging of information between the different stages required to transform a concept into reality. Whether there is an interest in designing a part, learning a new procedure, or simulating ideas, zoom helps people to see and understand issues very clearly than many other techniques.<sup>10</sup>

Internet technology has changed the way global education is conducted and shared; which is migrating fast towards online due to present challenges with face to face method of teaching. In an effort to meet changing expectations, to respond to education trends, zoom capability supported by the World Wide Web, offers great opportunities. Not only does the World Wide Web enable information to be easily shared, applications with interactive capabilities are also improved.<sup>11</sup>

The importance of zoom has increased significantly in the past few decades. In institutions of learning, it helps to clarify and compress information as well as to punctuate or emphasize a particular point. Among its functions are to facilitate the accuracy and standardization of the message being communicated; bring into the classroom inaccessible processes, events, situations, materials and phase changes in either space or time; illustrate, clarify, and

reinforce oral printed communication, abstract concepts, quantitative relationships, specific details and spatial relationships; provide concreteness (realistic detail) in the learning situation; increase student curiosity, interest and concentration; and present the learner the opportunity to perceive an object, process or situation from a variety of vantage points and provide essential instructional feedback.<sup>12</sup>

Other benefits of zoom are:

- Designed for use in variable bandwidth environments giving it consistent performance when used with consumer grade internet connections.
- Enables users to make use of participation features such as:
  - Participant feedback (yes/no, hand raise, faster/slower, clap, need a break, away)
  - In-session chat
  - Polling
  - Breakout rooms
  - Screen Sharing (desktop, applications. whiteboard)
  - File Sharing (via cloud services or via the chat)
- Intuitive user interface for easily creating, managing and attending web conferencing. A Zoom account is not required to attend a Zoom session.
- Hosted in the cloud, so it does not rely on the main campus network to function.
- Can add ability to meet via Zoom to existing Outlook and Teams meetings.
- Is available as a desktop app. mobile app. via browser.
- Integrates easily with Canvas for online instruction.
- Can save recordings of Zoom session to the cloud or locally.
- Supports inviting guests from outside WWU.
- Permits users to schedule online meetings.
- Used by many of WWU's external partners, such as state agencies and K12 school districts, and most of Washington State's universities and community/technical colleges.
- Provides dial-in conference services as well as standard internet-based sessions.

#### **b. Facebook**

Facebook can be the ideal social media platform to utilize in classrooms for teaching and learning purposes. Instead of putting instructors and students alike through a new learning curve when dealing with a traditional online classroom dashboard, it is imperative to embrace what everyone already knows.

The teachers should guide students in following the class's Facebook page and the instructor can apply it to post class updates, share homework assignments and encourage discussion. Even when a student is not active on Facebook, these Pages are still accessible when signed out.

Lecturers/teachers can also design Facebook groups for each of their classes and stream Facebook live lectures, post discussion questions, assign homework and make class

announcements. It can likewise be applied to keep the students engaged during school breaks.<sup>13</sup>

### c. WhatsApp

Teachers and students can design a WhatsApp group chat for easy and gainful access and communication between teachers and students, students and students, teachers and parents, among parents and teachers and students.<sup>14</sup> WhatsApp helps to facilitate the creation and sharing of video, audio and text messages among users.

Furthermore, WhatsApp was launched in 2009. It is a free multi-platform messaging app that enables users send and receive text messages, make video and voice calls, share their status and more with a Wi-Fi connection. Part of what allows this app to perform is that it works on various phone and computer operating systems, so you can continue your conversation anytime and anywhere. It can also take advantage of Wi-Fi and cellular data to make one-on-one or group calls, reducing the need for expensive calling charges.<sup>15,16</sup>

WhatsApp uses a phone's cellular or Wi-Fi connection to promote and enable messaging and voice calling to almost everyone on the planet, alone or in a group; and is particularly good for families and small collaborative workgroups. The app allows one to make calls, send and receive messages and share documents, photos, and videos. Equally, WhatsApp is absolutely free - with no fees or subscriptions - since it uses a phone's 5G, 4G, 3G, 2G, EDGE, or Wi-Fi connection instead of a cell plan's voice minutes or text plan. Likewise, if one is connected via wi-fi, it will not eat into one's data plan. It is thus, a very essential online / digital platform that can be used for teaching and learning outcomes.<sup>17</sup>

### Relevance of Online Education in Nigerian Educational System

The deployment of online education in Nigerian educational system is needful; especially in keeping with the best practices all over the world. In the first place, online education Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which is the digital processing and utilization of information by the use of electronic computers. It encompasses the storage, retrieval, conversion and transmission of information.<sup>18</sup> It is also a generic term that refers to technologies that are being used for collecting, storing, editing and passing on information in various forms. ICT is of immense help in virtually all areas of education in incorporating ICT resources into the curricula; such as computers, learning laboratories, internet facilities and multimedia systems. The use of these resources will offer teachers and students new and exciting ways of teaching and learning.

Okafor<sup>19</sup> opined that for the Nigerian society to be abreast with the rest of the world, education must embrace online platforms; emphasizing that electronic type of teaching is becoming more and more of a perfect method. Murray<sup>20</sup> also corroborated the 1998 UNESCO world education report on "teachers and teaching in a changing world" by reiterating that education will need to come to terms with the new technologies which will require substantial public and private sector investments in software research and development, purchase of hardware and refurbishment of schools.

Thus, in order to enhance the effective teaching and learning of courses in Nigeria and prepare



Nigerian teachers and students to match up to their counterparts in the globe, the incorporation of online education is very relevant. The use of ICT for instance, can enhance teachers' professional knowledge, enabling planning and preparation for teaching to be more efficient and extending curriculum activities. Teachers' exposure to ICT would further improve the quality of teaching, cause drastic decline in students' failure, develop and solidify students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities, among others.<sup>21</sup>

Scarino<sup>22</sup> opined further that we are now firmly embedded in a time when digital technologies are normalized. These digital technologies are now prominent feature of contemporary education. The use of online education in teaching and learning in our institutions of learning will help the teachers and students create and adapt to the new dimensions of teaching and learning with the aim of changing the attitudes, values, and aspiration of the teachers and learners. It is necessary thus to embrace online education in our present world as it would enhance better students' understanding and encourage their participation in classrooms.<sup>23</sup> Teachers should acquire the necessary skills in computer operation and other ICT accessories in order to effectively utilize online education tools for the effective teaching in classroom situations.

According to Yusuf<sup>24</sup>, online education as an innovation in the teaching-learning process can take the form of texts, pictures, tables, graphs, emails, fax, chat groups, discussion groups, Short Message Services (SMS), socializing portals, dictionaries, electronic - encyclopedia, power point presentations, websites and audio-videos, etc. It also performs instructional roles such as making learners feel more enthusiastic and relaxed to learn various topics and tasks.

In 2011, the Federal Government developed a policy on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), with the aim of making Nigeria an ICT inclined country in Africa and also a leading player in the use of ICT in the world.<sup>25</sup> Governments' position on ICT in education is echoed in the national policy on education where government reiterated its commitment to provide facilities and necessary infrastructures for the promotion of ICT in schools.

Very importantly, more benefits of online education include unhindered access to education from any part of the world, in a designation of one's choice, learning at one's convenient time, faster graduation rate and opportunities of quality education from quality personnel, schools, libraries, books, internet, etc.<sup>26</sup> This means that one can be in Nigeria and assess information from Britain, Spain, America, India, etc. It also implies that one can school online, choosing a country of one's choice and keying into the school online programme(s); it further connotes that one can have classmates from different parts of the world, have the best lecturers / tutors; as well as free access to quality ideas, theories and postulations from great scholars and erudite. Again, one's education will not be affected by incessant strikes, global pandemics and exigencies as well as mobility / travelling challenges / risks among others.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, an online course may include a requirement that students and teachers meet once or periodically in a physical setting for lectures, practice/class assignment or examination; so long as the time spent in the physical setting does not exceed 25% of the total course time.<sup>28,29</sup> In

the end, educated individuals are developed who are expected to improve the society socially, morally, economically and politically; knowing that the strength of a society/nation lies in the quality of manpower it has.

### **Conclusion**

Applying educational technologies in schools enhances online education, student- teacher interactions, connection and relationships. It facilitates teaching and learning experiences, course sharing, content creation, assessments and feedback. Likewise, educators can reach and interact with their students from any location in the globe and lectures can be fixed at any time suitable to both. Also, philosophers/educators and students can optimize these technologies to further classroom teachings and to build their digital skills in consonance with emerging trends in education. In addition, knowledge in technology aggrandizes educators' and students' interest, competence, confidence, creativity, employability and output and also equips them for the future. However, online education comes with some challenges to many educators, students and parents; particularly those in developing countries where the accessibility, availability and use of technology in education are limited. Also, cost of accessing online education, network issues, poor power supply, poor digital skills, distractions, inaccessibility and availability are other factors that can hinder online study from home. There is also the issue of time to learn and master new technologies that might be needed as well as noises that are produced internally or externally from neighbours and neighbourhood.

### **Recommendation**

The following are hereby recommended:

- 1) School administrators should partner with the federal and state governments in developing appropriate technology for online education in order to facilitate learning
- 2) School administrators should have a standard blue print on their own that states how their schools are to actualize online education (for those who have not started) or how to sustain it (for those who have started practicing).
- 3) There should be periodic workshop for teachers and students on online education in respective schools which should be organized by such schools' administrators.
- 4) Students should be tested regularly on online education. For instance, they may be given assignment that will make them access different online platforms such as skype.com, goggle classroom, youtube.com, etc. They can also be exposed to online learning using Zoom, Skype, Facebook, Twitter and so on.
- 5) In order to be a great educator, one must study great educators. Thus, students should periodically be given online assignment on renown educators for their personal development.
- 6) Schools should be equipped with internet and ICT facilities for easy access.

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