

## Re-Training Universal Basic Education (UBE) Teachers for Meeting the Challenges of E-Learning

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**Abstract:** E-learning is an electronic mode of learning which makes use of various information and communication technology (ICT) facilities such as computer, video, telephone, digital camera, Internet etc. This mode of learning makes both teaching and learning easier and richer. UBE teachers lack the prerequisite skill in the use of ICT in teaching-learning process. This could hamper the realization of the laudable objectives of UBE. Hence this paper portrays the need to re-train UBE teachers to equip them with the prerequisite skills they need in the use of e-learning facilities in teaching-learning process. The needs examined include: the need to: update UBE teachers with current issues in their profession; cope with population explosion in schools; develop creativity potential of teachers and for information and communication technology literacy amongst UBE teachers. The implications of these needs were also elucidated. The implications include: provision of in-service training for UBE teachers; provision of e-learning facilities; training and provision of skilled technicians; regular power supply; and adequate funding of UBE programme.

**Key words:** Universal • Challenges • E-Learning • Training • Meeting

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### INTRODUCTION

The present age is characterized by radical scientific and technological changes on our living, learning and working pattern. Every sphere of life, including education is going electronic. E-learning is fast replacing conventional instructional materials which are viewed as inadequate for helping contemporary teachers and students meet with the challenges posed by present information and technological age. In spite of this prevailing circumstances improvised and dilapidated instructional materials are in use in Nigeria [1].

The concept of e-learning revolves around the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching-learning process. E-learning is an electronic mode of accessing and transmission of knowledge that may not necessarily involve physical contact between teacher and students. Awoke[2] states that e-learning is about connecting learners to other learners, teachers to professional support services and providing platforms for learners. E-learning enables both teachers and learners to access information not readily available in their environment very fast. It transcends the boundaries of traditional classroom instruction and so is most valuable

for distance education and individualized instruction. E-learning provides flexible learning options capable of addressing not only formal educational needs but also the non-formal education needs in such areas as literacy, numeracy, health and hygiene as well as labor market training and retraining, life-long learning and special human challenges.

Universal Basic education (UBE) was launched by President Olusegun Obasanjo in Nigeria in September 1999. It is geared towards providing free and qualitative basic education for every Nigerian child. Universal Basic Education (UBE) teacher is faced with enormous task of giving qualitative education to our ever increasing number of students. This task has become even more arduous considering the fast rate at which new knowledge becomes obsolete as a result of increase in research that has brought about expansion in knowledge. UBE teachers need to be current in their profession and be well trained to meet the challenges of e-learning. It has been established that most Nigerian teachers are ill-equipped to meet such challenges. Hence the need to re-train them especially the UBE teachers, so that they will be in a better position to help achieve the laudable objectives of UBE.

**Universal Basic Education and its Objectives:** It has been the yearning of various Nigerian government to provide basic and qualitative education for every Nigerian child for purposeful living. In 1976, Nigerian government introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE) in all states of the federation to provide equal education opportunity to every Nigerian child. Along the line UPE hit the rock due to poor implementation. The government did not relent in its desire to provide basic education to the populace, hence the launching of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999.

Universal Basic Education was launched in Nigeria in September, 1999 by President Olusegun Obasanjo to provide nine years of free and compulsory education to every child. It aims to equip individuals with qualitative knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them contribute meaningfully to social, economic and technological development of the country. UBE is encompassing both in the recipients and in the funding. According to Bitner and Bitner [3] "This time around, education for all is seen as the responsibility of all". UBE stems from primary to Junior Secondary School. According to Ediafiogho [4] the specific objectives of Universal basic Education in Nigeria are to:

- Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- Provide free compulsory universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school going age.
- Reduce drastically drop out rate from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency.
- Cater through appropriate form of complementary approaches to the promotion of basic education for the learning needs of young people who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling.
- Ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills needed for laying the foundation for life-long learning.

According to Egwu [5] the question that seems to border people's minds is whether UBE will succeed this time around or, whether it will collapse like its fore-runners. The success of any laudable education programme such as the UBE depends to a large extent on the teachers, who are the implementers of the programme. All educational planning, policies and funding may be a

mere waste if the teachers are not adequately trained and motivated for proper implementation. There is a general notion that many Nigerian teachers are ill-prepared to face the challenges of UBE especially in this information and communication technology (ICT) age, in which e-learning is the order of the day.

**Present Status of Nigerian Teacher Education:** Teacher education is the training provided to teachers to enable them acquire professional competences with which to impart knowledge to their students. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2008) states that no education system can rise above the quality of the teachers, therefore teacher education shall continue to receive major emphasis in all educational planning and development. This implies that the government recognizes and appreciates the vital and cardinal role of the teacher in implementing its educational goals. The goals of teacher education as outlined in Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004: 39) are to:

- Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teacher for all levels of our educational system.
- Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goal.
- Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations
- Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

The above goals are laudable and take cognizance of the need to update the teachers to meet the challenges of contemporary society. The question is to what extent have these goals been achieved or being achieved. There is a general notion that many Nigerian teachers are ill-equipped to meet the challenges of e-learning. Ekenedo and Aniodo [6] notes that one of the issues which dominates current educational crises in Nigeria is teacher quality. He observes that teachers' level of preparation is inadequate and has not prepared them for the realities of the classroom and the new challenges posed by current information and technology age. Supporting this notion, Etuk [7] identified poor quality of teachers as the main problem militating against primary education in Nigeria.

She observes that this in turn might have contributed to poor academic performance of children in primary school. Federal Government of Nigeria [8] also notes that teachers graduate from training institutions such as universities and colleges of education with very little skills to meet the demands of their job at UBE level. High level of computer illiteracy among teachers in basic education level is an indication that many of them did not receive any training on computer assisted instruction while in school. Poor quality of primary and secondary school teachers resulting from poor training is a clear indication that the goals of teacher education are yet to be achieved. The teachers in their present status can hardly meet the challenges of e-learning in this information and communication technology age. It is therefore imperative that UBE teachers be re-trained so that they will acquire knowledge and skills on the application of e-learning facilities in teaching learning process.

#### **Need to Re-Train UBE Teachers on the Application of E-Learning Facilities.**

#### **Need to Up-Date UBE Teachers with Current Issues:**

There is information up surge in our present information age. The rapid obsolescence of ideas in our fast changing world makes it imperative for UBE teachers to keep abreast with current issues in their profession. Failure to do this will render the teachers obsolete and irrelevant. E-learning facilities offer the opportunity to constantly receive current information and ideas in any field of life. Federal Republic of Nigeria [9] posits that e-learning connects teachers to professional support services and provides platform for learning. UBE teachers therefore, need to be re-trained on the use of e-learning facilities if they are to be constantly fed with current information in their profession

#### **Need to Cope with Population Explosion in Primary and Secondary School:**

Many primary and post primary schools in Nigeria are over-populated due to the introduction of UBE. According to Maduwesi [10], UBE had led to higher enrolment in primary and junior secondary school and this in turn, has led to insufficient learning resources. In cases where as many as fifty or more students are crowded in one classroom, it will be difficult for the teacher to give effective instruction and individual attention to the students without the aid of e-learning facilities E-learning can help salvage the problem of over- population in schools. Its facilities and their various mode of instruction such as computer

assisted instruction teleconferencing, closed circuit television can help ease the problem of over-population in schools.

#### **Need to Develop Creativity Potentials of Teachers:**

Creativity deals with the ability of the human mind to think and fashion out something new or novel in order to solve a problem or problems. The society is in dire need of creative people. The school is a means of solving societal problems. UBE teachers need to be creative so as to contribute meaningfully to National Economic Empowerment Development (NEED). Without creative teachers it may be difficult to meet the challenges posed by Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). MDGs seeks to address issues of poverty, gender equality, education, environment and global partnership for development, agreed by international community to be achieved by the year 2015, Mole [11].

Africa needs an educational system that enables, supports and expects everyone to discover, develop and contribute his or her unique abilities in the service of his or her family, village, community, nation, continent and the world and to remain relevant in the technology driven globalizing world society [12]. According to Ogoji [13] nurturing creativity should be started at the early childhood education, but at times teachers are unaware of what to do. He stresses that teachers at various levels of educational institutions should try to create an enabling environment for nurturing creativity in children. Oginni and Awobodu [14] observes that teachers do not consider some of the creativity enhancing behaviors as important and so lack their exhibition. He points out that teachers are not as creative and innovative as they ought to be. It follows therefore, that students may not be creative except their teachers are creative.

Re- training teachers in the skill and application of e-learning will help them develop their creative potentials and that of their students. E-learning has the capacity of building creative skills in various fields of life such as teaching, communication, language, visual arts, music, medicine, e-learning has demonstrated that it is capable of enhancing creativity, problems solving skill, critical thinking, communication and productivity skills, Okebukola [15]. Today organizations are looking more seriously than ever before on how to enhance the creative potentials in their work force [16]. The educational sector needs more than any other organizations to pursue the enhancement of the creative potentials of the teachers since the teachers are the builders of a nation's human resources.

**Need for Information Communication Technology (ICT) Literacy Amongst UBE Teachers:** E-learning is made possible through the use of various ICT facilities such as computer, electronic book, digital camera, video, overhead projector, internet, radio, fax machine, teaching machine. ICT is gradually controlling every field of human endeavor including education. Its facilities are revolutionary tools on educational pedagogy and methodology. It has the capacity to facilitate acquisition of basic skills promote inquiry and exploration skills.

Presently, many Nigerian teachers are ICT illiterates and so cannot make use of ICT facilities to enhance teaching and learning. A cursory look at many public primary schools and secondary schools in Nigeria shows that the teachers rely heavily on chalk, chalkboard and textbooks as their main instructional materials. This presuppose that the ICT facilities are either not available or the teacher are incompetent in using them. Computer is not part of classroom technology in over 90% of public schools in Nigeria, hence chalkboard and textbooks continue to dominate classroom activities, Umar [17].

According to World Bank [18] teachers need to have rudimentary understanding of how to operate a computer. It is important that UBE teachers have a working knowledge of input and output devices, how to perform basic system operations such as programme installation, deletion and back up files [11]. There is also need for UBE teachers to know how to make use of different kinds of programmes to facilitate teaching and learning in both large and small group instructions.

The need to re-train UBE teachers to meet the challenges of e-learning is therefore urgent. The teachers may find it difficult to cope with the technological demands of their Job without adequate training on the application of e-learning facilities in teaching process. Hence, all hands must be on deck to help teachers acquire the prerequisite ICT skills so that they can remain relevant in this technological age.

**Implications of Re-Training UBE Teachers for Meeting the Challenges of E-Learning:**

- In-Service training has to be provided for UBE teachers to equip them with prerequisite skills on the application of e-learning facilities in teaching-learning process.
- E-learning facilities are to be made available in primary schools and junior secondary schools. Lack of ICT facilities is one of the barriers to effective utilization of e-learning.

- Skilled technicians who will operate and maintain the facilities have to be trained and employed in primary and junior secondary schools.
- Regular power- supply should be made available. One of the factors that has had detrimental effect on all sectors of the economy is epileptic power supply. Teachers may not effectively utilize e-learning facilities without adequate power supply.
- UBE has to be well funded. The provision of all the resources and services for effective application of e-learning in UBE hangs on adequate funding.

**CONCLUSION**

The tune of a music determines the dancing steps. Presently the world's music tune is that of e-learning. It is either the contemporary UBE teacher dance to the tune or fizzle out of his/her profession. Unfortunately many Nigerian teachers are ICT illiterate and so incompetent in the application of e-learning facilities in teaching-learning process. Therefore, the need to re-train UBE teachers is imperative in this technology age.

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