

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND ADULT EDUCATION DELIVERY IN NIGERIA: A PARADIGM SHIFT

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### Abstract

*The paper examined social media and adult education delivery in Nigeria: a paradigm shift. Concepts of social media, adult education and blended learning were extensively discussed. Adult education as a flexible learning process accommodates innovations and creativity. Social media is seen as the most popular among younger and adult learners (females and males) and probably the most widely used in Nigeria. While blended learning is an introduction of online learning into a programme. Various forms of social media were highlighted which include amongst others Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram, the characteristics of social media were extensively discussed; to demonstrate an e-presence, inform others about who you are, and what you do, and communicate and share ideas and experiences. The paper further explained how social media can be used in adult education and also discussed the positive effect of social media which include an increase in user familiarity with technology, learner support learning, and fun and easy creative ways to learn amongst others. The challenges of using social media in adult education were highlighted amongst others lack of stable infrastructure, cost and instability, and inadequately trained facilitators. The paper recommends the provision of alternative sources of power, reduction in the cost of internet services, and training and retraining of facilitators.*

**Keywords:** Social, Media, Adult, Education, Delivery,

### Introduction

Adult education is a programme designed for adults, youths and out-of-school children who have never had the opportunity of attending any formal school or who because for one reason or another other were unable to finish the cycle of their studies. The educational programmes are such that they would help the learner(s) to be a good member of society. Considering the number of the out of school children and youths roaming the streets without any form of school, there is the need to come up with a programme that will assist the learners to achieve their goals. Adult learners are peculiar in their characteristics and responsibilities therefore it will not be out of context to come up with a programme that will address their peculiar issues.

Social media is seen as the most popular among younger and adult learners, and probably the most widely used in Nigeria. Social media is very easy and affordable. Majority of the adults and youths use it for fun and if it is fully utilized will be a powerful tool that can help adults, youths and out-of-school children to acquire knowledge skills that will be of enormous help to them and society. For a very long time, Nigeria has been faced with problems of access to educational opportunities, and low level of literacy among its adults and youths. One of the fundamental characteristics of adult education is flexibility in the content and approaches. Learners of today are born in the computer age which is why they are very familiar with computers and can manipulate them easily.

## **Conceptual clarifications**

### **Social Media**

Social Media are defined as media that are used for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques. In other words, it is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Wikipedia, 2011). In other words, Social Media is a Web 2.0 innovation encouraging user-generated content and extending the focus to the users by allowing them to curate others content to share among their networks. Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Gross (2010) emphasized that social media is a process that employs mobile and web-based technology (web 2.0 for instance) to create highly integrative platforms via which individuals and community share, create, discuss and modify users' generated content. Sometimes called social networking, social media is collaboratively produced and shared media content to network communities. Enang, (2014) further explained that social networking sites are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages to each other. Gupta (2014) enumerated social network sites like *Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Internet forums, chat rooms and message boards* where people meet and discuss topics of interest, *Flickr and Vimeo, blogs, wikis, and social bookmarking*. Social media is a category of online media where people are talking, participate, share, network, and bookmark online. In other words, social media are the social instrument of communication where users seek information and also interact. The interaction being referred to here is the ability to provide instant feedback in terms of reaction to the subject under discussion, which the traditional media –radio, television, newspaper and magazine - cannot provide.

### **Adult Education**

All adult educational activities are provided to learners through a variety of channels, including face-to-face interactions and distance-learning education, using both print and non-print teaching and learning materials or aids. Merriam and Brockett (1997) define adult education as 'activities intentionally designed to bring about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults'. This definition of adult education captures what it means to be an adult as seen in the previous section of this chapter.

UNESCO (1976: 2) provides a more comprehensive definition of adult education: *the term adult education denotes the:*

the entire body of organised educational processes, whatever the content, level, method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as an adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or

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professional qualifications or turn in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in a twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

Adult education is a form of education given to any person regarded as an adult by the society in which he or she belongs to provide him or her with skills or knowledge that will help him or her to improve socially, economically, and culturally and to empower him/her so that the person will be able to contribute meaningfully as a useful and responsible member of society. It is education based on the needs of the adult. Youngman (2001) observed that 'the necessity for people to learn throughout their life derives from the needs created by the different phases of the life-cycle. Adult educationists have argued in favour of a more flexible way to pass knowledge from a facilitator to learners at the learners' convenience. What this implies is that the learners are expected to have a choice in the learning environment of where, when and how learning should take place. This is what experts call flexible learning or personalized learning. Macquarie University in Australia defines flexible learning as one which, aims to meet individual needs by providing choices that allow students to meet their educational requirements in ways suiting their individuality. The flexibility of learning refers to providing adult learners with increased choice, convenience, and personalization that suits them. However one of the major differences between adult education and formal education is its flexibility in content, approach and methods, learner's needs and aspirations are taken into cognizance and also determine how the learning can be.

### **Blended learning**

Blended learning is associated with the introduction of online media into a course or programme, while at the same time recognizing that there is merit in retaining face-to-face contact and other traditional approaches to supporting students. (Macdonald, 2008). Blended learning has been described as a mode of teaching that eliminates time, place, and situational barriers, whilst enabling high-quality interactions between teachers and students (Kanuka, Brooks, & Saranchuck, 2009). It echoes the practice of distance education that emphasized the flexibility of time, place, and pace of learning. Blended learning refers to events that combine aspects of online and face-to-face instruction" (Rooney, 2003, Ward & LaBranche, 2003).

Technology has increased the breadth and depth of access to education. This is significant because it has been a hallmark of western education that the co-location in time and space of facilitators, learners, and resources is the *sine qua non* of education. Changing from a classroom-only context to include a major online component requires adjustment for both teachers and students (Swenson & Redmond, 2009). The speedy adoption of educational technologies is evidence that new forms of teaching and learning are possible. However, shifts of this magnitude need major changes in approach from administrators in education, especially in higher education, where lectures still dominate teaching practice.

## **Various Social Media Platforms**

The following are some of the social media platforms:

Blog: Simply defined as a kind of website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in reverse chronological order.

Facebook:

Whatsapp:

Twitter:

Instagram

Skype

YouTube amongst others

## **Characteristics of Social Media**

The following are some of the characteristics of social media:

To demonstrate an e-presence, to be recognized and confirm existence on the web (nowadays, if you are not on the web, you don't exist)

To inform others about whom you are, what you do and what makes you different etc...

To communicate and share ideas and experiences

To campaign about something

To keep track of what you've been doing

To be the first and be recognized

To earn some income (doing advertisements etc ...)

To increase popularity and fame

Call (Voice)

Video Call

Group/Conference call (Voice)

Group/Conference call (Video)

Share Link (Discourage Plagiarism)

Video Conference (Descriptive)

Material (Books –PDF, WORD, etc)

Create Secure/unsecured group - chat

Share Link (Discourage Plagiarism)

## **How to use social media in Adult Education delivery**

Youths and adults constitute the bulk of internet users in Nigeria and instead of allowing them to use it for fun and other acts it will be useful if it is integrated with their learning process. However, a study found that, of the students between the ages of 16 to 18, in thirteen urban high schools observed in the US, 94 per cent used the Internet, 82 cents go online at home and 77 per cent had a profile on a social networking site. When asked what they learn from using social networking sites, the students listed technology skills as the top lesson, followed by creativity, being open to new or diverse views and communication skills. Similar things were tried in the past in the use of radio in teaching adult learners in Nigeria; it is called the Literacy by Radio programme. The programme couldn't succeed because of the inability of most of the state's governments to pay their counterpart funds. Nigeria with a

population of 180,000,000 according to the 2006 national census has internet users of 91.6m people, which indicates that nearly 50% of the population is active on internet usage (Vanguard, 2017).

Given the importance of catching our youths in the pursuit of education if social media is integrated into our educational delivery it will help both adults and youths to acquire education within the shortest possible time. The facilitator as it is called in adult education (teacher) can form groups of learners using either WhatsApp, Twitter, or Facebook, amongst others and is to serve as the administrator of the group and can also prepare his lessons using either video or audio devices record it and then send to the learners either through their group or any of the medium. The learners will download and listen to a lesson before the next face-to-face contact. The learners can equally send their questions back to the facilitator and will also reply in the same medium. Issues can also be deliberated on the platform, which will serve as a discussion group. The facilitator will make sure all the group members are participating or draw the attention of those that are passive to be more active. Assignments can also be sent through the same medium and a time frame should be set aside for the submission. Learning through this medium will make all the learners more attached to their media so as not to be taken unaware of the happenings in the lessons. The lessons will be more attractive to the learners because the facilitator will use various methods and strategies that will make the learning more interesting and meaningful.

A facilitator can ensure some of the following while facilitating learning using social media:

1. Attendance: a facilitator can create a link that will connect him with his learners and then can ask all his learners after a lesson and require them to respond about the topic or lesson and comment or seek more clarifications. If this method is adopted, it means that the facilitator must be available for answering students' questions via the site chosen as the learning site. The merit of this method is multi-facet:
  - (i) The method helps the facilitator keep track of the number of active learners;
  - (ii) The facilitator gets instant feedback on the post; and
  - (iii) Learners who are reticent can speak up (so to speak).
2. Sharing of notes. Another way of helping learners learn within an environment that is friendly is to post class notes on the chosen social network so that students can consult them and use them for further reading. Beyond that, it will also help learners who missed out face to face contact to find out what they missed and can also read others' reactions to the lecture and if need be add to the reading materials posted on the site. The danger here is that some students may stay away from class since they knew that lecture notes are available online and attendance can be generated online too.
3. Make Learning real for learners through social sites: it is possible to create a page wholly dedicated to making presumed hard where learners can research and contribute to. The merit of this method of learning lies in the fact that

boring and brain-tasking subjects can be made interesting. Sites in this category include Twitter and Google Earth etc.

4. Engage students in ethical discussion: one way to get learners to use social media other than for chatting, sending racy pictures or searching for porn sites is to engage them in a discussion that will be thought-provoking and which will at the same be a renaissance of the Nigerian value system, especially for courses like social studies in secondary schools or Nigerian people and culture and some others in the university curriculum. For instance, there are sites on Facebook that encourage freedom of expression and as well talk about the values of peaceful coexistence and tolerance, politics without bitterness amongst others.

### **Effect of social media on Adult education**

The following are some of the positive effects of social media on education:

1. Increase user familiarity with technology: when learners use social networking sites to learn, they are exposed to new technology, by using these sites they develop a positive attitude towards using technology systems; they can edit and customize content and think about online design and layout. Besides that, it affords them the opportunity to share creative original work as well as practice safe and responsible use of information and technology.
2. Learner support learning: when a facilitator knows what skills learners are learning and what experiences they are being exposed to, they can help foster and expand those skills by directing them to the appropriate sites. The essence is to provide information about the experiential background of the learners to build learning material around it.
3. Fun and easy creative way to learn: learning is more interesting when it is interactive and done in a less structured environment, particularly when the learner is in his environment without fear of being castigated or condemned.
4. Social Bookmarking: one advantage of social media is that facilitators and learners can enjoy one such service as a social bookmarking service. The implication of using bookmarks is that bookmarks can be saved online so that you can access them from any computer anywhere. It also comes with the option of either making the bookmarks public or making them private. For purposes of learning, bookmarks can be made public so others too can visit and discover how such sites can be useful to them. In addition, most social bookmark sites keep track of how many times a particular link is publicly bookmarked, and the more a site is bookmarked the higher it appears in search results in that service's search engine.

### **The negative effect of social media on Adult education**

The negative effect of social media on education can be seen in the following:

1. With more time spent on social media less time is left for individual interaction: one of the major criticism of using social media for education is the reduction of face-to-face contact that the traditional learning environment

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- provided whereby teachers and learners see themselves and can learn and interact through verbal and non-verbal cues.
2. Decrease in reading culture: different studies have shown a drop in the reading habit of the Nigerian child as a result of the thirst for entertainment programmes in the media, yet that may be insignificant compared to the affinity most youth are now developing for social networks over reading and other things.
  3. Fear of wrong information: The Internet is a database of new media; as such facilitators and learners have access to so much information that experts are now expressing fears of information authenticity. Although they have more information they need to complete any given assignment or task, there is however the fear of what information is right, enough or should be rejected. It reduces verbal skills development.
  4. Reduces constructive arguments: Learners do not seek out diverse views to construct an argument, rather what they do is presume that if something appeared online, then it must be correct, without subjecting it to thorough criticisms and validation.

### **Challenges of using Social media in Adult Education delivery in Nigeria**

Using social media for adult education delivery in Nigeria is faced with numerous challenges amongst which are:

1. Lack of Stable infrastructure: Nigeria, like many Third World countries, constantly battles with the outages of power across the country so much that even when the learner has the means to access information through these social sites, the unavailability of power supply has always had a debilitating effect on the desire to source for information.
2. Cost and instability of Internet connection: the cost of connecting to the internet is very high in Nigeria as most telecommunication providers now see it as a new way of making more money. However, even those who could access it through their mobile phones are often handicapped by the monthly subscription to be paid to the service providers and also the stability of the network.
3. Inadequately trained facilitator: the majority of the facilitators are not trained in the new methods, how a facilitator can produce his lessons with pictures, sounds and animations, upload and send them to the learners or how he /she can create discussion groups via the social network.

### **Recommendations**

Given the above challenges the following recommendations are made:

1. Provision of alternative source of power: centres and learners are always encouraged to source for alternative power supply to get information at all times. Government should also subsidize the cost of solar energy that is to be affordable to all or make it also free for educational institutions.
2. Reduction in the cost of internet services: government should intervene in drawing the attention of the network providers to reduce the cost of internet services to allow people to have access to the internet or to even make it free

as part of their corporate social responsibility for people to have access to the internet.

3. Training and retraining of facilitators: facilitators should be trained and retrained on the new methods of delivery to be familiar with the new approach. The training should be vigorously pursued where incentives will be given to those who are very ready to catch up with the new system. Facilitators should be sent for refresher courses on the new methods.



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