Technology Integration in Repositioning Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment and National Development

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Abstract

The paper made a case for integrating technology into education as a panacea for the repositioning of education that will sustain youth empowerment and ensure National Development in Nigeria; The youth was defined in terms of age. Several definitions were cited but that of Nigeria definition of 12 to 30 years of age was accepted for this paper. The paper points out that the youth has overwhelming population in every country and if harnessed properly will sustain National Development. Technology integration was discussed and the merits and challenges highlighted. Youth empowerment situation in Nigeria was equally discussed. The causes and consequences of unemployment were x-rayed. Conclusion was drawn and the paper outlined seven recommendations based on the discussions to sustainable youth empowerment and National Development to include recognition of the youth, fixing power, provision of free internet, subsidizing cost of technologies like computer, training and retraining of teachers, improving conditions of teachers and guiding the learners on the proper and positive use of mobile technologies to promote effective and efficient learning.

Keywords: Education; technology integration; youth empowerment; national development.

Introduction

The youthful population of Nigeria constituted over 70% of the population according to 2006 census (Odoh & Emeh 2014). Nearly 50% of the developing world population is youth and children. These statistics are not surprising to us because when we go to the universities, churches, markets, correctional centres and even along the streets we can see that the population of youth is high. In contextualizing youth, as observed by Odoh & Emeh (2014) there is no universal definition of the youth population. African Youth Report (2009) defined youth as people between 15 and 39 years of age. In Africa each country defines their youth population differently. In Nigeria it is defined as those between 12 and 30 years. In Nigeria, graduates above 30 years of age are excluded from participation in the compulsory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). It is significant to note that the United Nations (UNESCO) (2011) defines youth as those aged 15 to 24 years. Other countries and organizations define youth as follows:

- Ghana, Tanzania and South Africa
  15 and 35
- Swaziland
  12 and 30
- Botswana and Mauritius
  14 and 25
- Kenya
  15 and 30
- International Labour Organization (ILO)
  15 and 24
- African Union (AU)
  15 and 35

For the purpose of this paper, we shall take the Nigerian definition. The population of the youth is quite high. According to Anyanwu (2014), the youth population in Africa is 75 percent with over 60 percent being younger than 25 years. This overwhelming large population of the youth has some implications as they are "investment opportunity" (Anyanwu & Duru, 2014). The youth is an asset to any nation if they are harnessed and utilized in the right direction. The national youth policy recognizes that the youths are a key resource that can be tapped for the benefit of the whole country. As noted by (Odoh & Eme, 2014), society that prepares youth for sake of future

aspiration will not only secure her future development, but will prepare her next set of leaders with the challenges of national reconciliation and development. The role of youth on national development is sacrosanct to the whole developmental aspiration of any society. The youth are the cornerstone to societal rejuvenation. We should not forget that they form the largest percentage of the population and as such, they are the source of labour inputs as well as human capital in production. They provide large workforce supporting fewer children and the elderly.

As the most active segment of any society, they are the major determiners of peace and stability of any nation. Conversely, the degree of disorderliness and instability in society is also determined in part by youths. Taking the current situation in Nigeria today, majority of the kidnappers, Boko Haram members, terrorists, armed robbers, bandits, cultists, ritual killers, drug peddlers, prostitutes, unknown gunmen, herdsmen, political tugs, EndSars, online fraudsters etc are the youths.

This situation in Nigeria is worsening by day. We do not need any prophet or serious research to know that majority of all the youths are involved in all these criminal activities. They are also the unemployed or under employed youths. As noted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) an estimate of 172 million people worldwide are unemployed and this number is projected to increase as a result of the expanding labour force. Among other vulnerable groups, young people continue to be less likely to be in employment. The (ILO) also projected that in 2030, about 25 million young people aged 15-29 are expected to enter the labour force searching for employment. Statistical evidence from Nigeria reveals that the phenomenon of youth unemployment has reached a disturbing level. For instance the National Bureau of Statistics NBS (2018) showed that the unemployment rate in the country in 2017 and 2018 were 20.42% and 23.13% respectively. This high rate of unemployment to a very large extent is promoting social vices as listed above and have almost stalled national development. There is an urgent need to empower our youths through employment if this nation will survive.

Proper education is the main factor of youth empowerment which will give the country sustainable development. The proper education we are talking about is education that is integrated with modern technologies and education with values and morals. "Education without values as useful as it is, seems rather to make man or the recipient a more clever devil" (Anagbogu, 2022). Twenty-first century education which began January 1, 2001 and will end on December 31, 2100cannot be successfully delivered without technology. Although technology has some challenges especially in Nigeria but the benefits by far, outweighs the challenges. Twenty-first century education is technologically driven. The structure, learning environment, teaching approaches,learning approaches, content, learning technology, learning devices and assessment process have all drastically changed. Gambari (2021).

We cannot afford to be left behind hence the urgent need to reposition education for sustainable youth empowerment and national development.
The outbreak of COVID-19 Pandemic that shut the entire world especially the educational institutions for over one year was a blessing in disguise. Countries, states, and individuals were forced to find alternatives for giving education to learners. These alternatives were based on Information Communication Technology (ICT). Who knows what may come up again; war, another pandemic or natural disasters like flood, earthquake etc that are capable of shutting down face to face mode of education? The time for repositioning education in Nigeria is now.

Education
Education is another concept that has many definitions varying with age, country, purpose, individuals and disciplines. Education is the bedrock of National development in every country. But we continue to emphasize proper education NOT any education. According to Shekarau in National Policy on Education, (2014) "All the strategy plans in education as well as the blueprints of the transformation agenda expanded the role for education as an investment for economic, social and political development to include education as

    (i)   An aggregate tool for empowerment for the poor and the socially marginalized groups

    (ii)   An effective means of developing the full capacities and potentials of human resource as well

(iii)   The development of competent work force through the acquisition of practical life skills relevant to the world of work as a veritable means of developing sound intelligent learning societies fit and relevant to the 21st century".

Gambari (2021) opined that in 21st century education, traditional structure has changed to digital environment, Brick & Mortar classrooms to online/virtual classes; teacher-centred to learner-centred approach. Individualized learning to collaborative learning, content-based to outcome based. He said that lecture notes are changing to mobile devices for e sharing using social networking and in assessment, pen on paper is giving way to computer-based assessment and from product to process and product.

These changes that have already taken place in developed countries are just being introduced gradually in developing nations like Nigeria. We cannot afford to be left behind. Apart from digital education, there is the case of system of education. Some systems of education are not good enough especially those that do not produce employable graduates. Others do not give equal opportunity to all. Yet some are not inclusive. We advocate for education that emphasizes, character, value, skills and merit among others. Education should not be the learning of facts rather it should be the training of mind to think. It is necessary to note that education is not an end in itself, but a vehicle towards personal, organization, community or national development/transformation.

According to National Policy on Education (FGN 2014) Education in Nigeria is regarded as "an instrument per excellence for social and economic reconstruction of the nation" Government regarded education as a key to the realization of Nigeria's collective aspiration of being among the top 20 developed nations of the world by the year 2020. Today we are in 2022 what is Nigeria's education position in West Africa not to talk of the continent of Africa or the entire globe? The country is very very far from that aspiration. Nigeria seems to have the highest number of out-of-school children in the world with over 13.4 million children out of school. Nigeria is one of the poorest country of the world. Currently the university teachers- Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has been on strike for over five months stated February 2022 and still counting. The country does not seem to regard education of her children as a priority and it is very unfortunate. Even the percentage budget for education is one of the lowest. It has always been below 9% over the past decade. The football coach of the Super Eagles Earns $870,000 (₦29m) monthly startment but a professor earns less than (₦500,000) monthly. Countries like Germany has free education at all levels. But the beauty of their system is that one's performance determines the school and the course one goes to and study. Their system encourages brilliance and hardwork.

The German system of education is a system that allows the children of the poor who are intelligent to go to school free and study the same course with the children of the rich and highly placed in the same school or college. Their lecturers and professors are among the highest paid workers just like in United Kingdom, American, Japan, Singapore etc.

Technology Integration in Education
Davies & West (2014) defines technology integration as the effective implementation of educational technology to accomplish intended learning outcomes. According to them educational technology is considered to be any tool, piece of equipment, or device – electronic or mechanical – that can be used to help students accomplish learning goals. According to Gambari (2021), it is the incorporation of digital resources and processes into the daily practices of schools. Eya, (2021) said that technology integration means the use of technology tools in general content areas in education to allow students to apply computer and technology skills to learning and problem-solving.

Today technology plays very important roles in our education. We use technologies for teaching as they help in teaching strategies, provide access to online electronic resources, mobile learning environment, virtual learning environment, continuous professional development and also provide global and regional online communities. These technologies for teaching are made available in different formats.

Teaching during the COVID-19 shutdown was possible because of technologies likewise teaching of people in difficult circumstances like in the prison, war front, refugee camps, herdsmen in the bush, sailors in the high seas, women in purdah military organizations, civil servants and other workers who cannot leave their workplace to go to regular and conventional schools for fulltime studies. Some of these technological tools for teaching include computers, cell phones, skype, teacher tube, school tube, web windows, movie, PowerPoint etc.

Just as we have technologies for teaching we also have technologies for learning. Jane Hart in Gambari (2021) discovered top 200 tools for learning. These tools help learners with learning strategies, give them access to online learning, improves their engagement, enhance their knowledge of retention, promote collaboration and motivates students to learn. It supports classroom instruction by creating opportunities for students to complete assignments on the computer rather than normal pen-on-paper.

There are also technologies for assessment of students. Kathy in Gambari (2021) discovered 75 digital tools to support assessment in the classroom. We can now access a wider range of skills and have software's for grading and plagiarism detection. People can be interviewed remotely. Results of examination can be released without delays. All these are possible because of technologies for assessment. Examination malpractices and misconducts can be detected, curbed and managed through technologies.

Youth Empowerment
More than 60% of our population in Nigeria are young people. Over half of these young people are not gainfully employed. The challenge of youth unemployment is a serious and sensitive issue because an idle brain they say is the devil's workshop. The unemployed persons are those of working ages who are without work. They are not in paid employment or self-employment. They are active frustrated and sensitive and usually cognizant of issues pertaining to social injustice which may result in feelings of neglect from benefits that they would have derived from natural/social resources. According to Efobi in Alhassan et al (2021), unemployed youthful population could be an endorsement for social vices and civil unrest if not well managed. It is quite unfortunate that the government is aware of the problems of youth unemployment, yet she is not addressing the issue effectively and efficiently.

Okojie in Anyanwu and Duru (2020), identified some causes of youth unemployment crisis in Nigeria to include poor quality of education, rapid rural-urban migration, rapid population of growth and small private sector. Other important factors include;
i.   Lack of Expansion of the Educational system
ii.   Corruption
iii. Rural-Urban Migration
iv.   Low standard of Education
v.   Rapid population growth
vi.   Economic Stagnation

Youth unemployment has some consequences that have been documented to include consequences on;
-   The tourism Sector
-   Increase in social vices and crimes
-   Brain drain
-   Mental problems and suicide
All that the authors are saying is that the youths should be empowered gainfully to avoid all the consequences of unemployment in Nigeria.

National Development
All efforts and activities of human is geared towards national development. Most of the conferences and workshops organized both at local, national, and international levels, are targeted on National Development. National Development is central to all sectors including Agriculture, Science and Technology, politics, commerce and industry, maritime, aviation etc.

Odoh and Eme (2014) said that the term "National Development" refers to a sustainable growth and development of a nation to a more desirable one. National development is people oriented and its success is evaluated in terms of the impact it has had in improving the lot of the masses. In defining the concept, the Third National Development plan of 1980 in Odoh and Eme (2014) says "Term development must mean the development of man, the unfolding and realization of his creative potentials, enabling him to

improve his material conditions of living through the use of resources available to him. It is a process by which man's personality is enhanced, and it is that enhanced, personal creativity, organized and disciplined – which is the moving force that brings about the socioeconomic transformation of any society.

Elugbe, (1994) said that "National Development" refers among other things, to the growth of the nation in terms of unity, education, economic well-being and mass participation in government. From the foregoing, development implies enhanced quality of life, equity and justice, as it takes into consideration the well-being, growth and advancement of individuals within the society.

The youths have a very important and significant role in national development. They contribute to peace building in every nations' economic development, stable political climate, production, self-help projects especially in the rural communities and build bridges of understanding across ethnic groups, political affiliations and religious divide. With all these important roles of the youths in national development, they face challenges of unemployment and underemployment, health problems, dropout of schools, limited sports and recreational facilities, abuse and exploitation, limited participation and opportunities to participate in decision making and poverty. It is unfortunate that they face all these challenges because they can better absorb new technologies and ideas and adapt them. The youths can take more risks and are more likely to challenge certain norms and sociopolitical processes that may be hindering economic development than their older counterparts. If the youths are empowered, adequately and supported, achievement of National Development will be rapidly realized.

Benefits of Technology Integration
The three major groups that benefit maximally in the technology integration in Education sector among others are the teachers, the learners and the school administrators. Others include the ministries of education, the future researchers, the private sector and the less privileged and the vulnerables in the society.

Teachers will be more productive as the integration will provide more tools for them. They will freely use multi-instructional strategies in their teaching thereby making understanding easier. Technology integration makes the teachers workload less stressful. It makes the teachers learn along with their students who are digital natives.

For the learners, it makes it easier to take ownership and control their learning time, pace and content. It is fascinating so it makes the learners to be active and responsible for their learning.

It ensures availability and accessibility of quality resources economically. It aids effective collaboration, enables dynamic media to be more readily exploited.

For the school Administrators, it ensures availability of resources at affordable cost, eases record keeping through the use of databases. It ensures prompt retrieval of information for decision-making and multiplicity of services provided. It makes home and school feasible, and eases the monitoring of wards progress. Students, programme assessment and evaluation become easier, cheaper and faster.

With technology integration, educational issues could be technologically handled, difficult routine tasks become easier. Instructional materials can be easily developed and delivered in varying contexts to learners.

Challenges of Technology Integration
Technology integration face some challenges in Nigeria, they include: Poor internet services, poor electricity supply, poor economy and its effects, high cost of ICT facilities, shortage of ICT experts, reluctance of teachers especially the older ones to change, lack of maintenance culture, inadequate locally produced software and above all bad governance.

Way Forward
The authors, think that there is no better alternative to technology integration in repositioning education for National Development. The way forward should be to develop the will power. Where there is Will there will always be a way. We also need good leadership starting from the Federal, State, Local Government Areas down to the School Heads and families. We

equally need good followership and consideration for our teeming young people. There is also the need for strong determination irrespective of our conditions and challenges.

Conclusion

Good and proper education is the key to success in any adventures. Our education can solve no problems if technologies meant to support innovative teaching and learning are not available at all levels of educations. According to Gambari (2021) "technology influences students in six major areas, performance, knowledge retention, ability levels, gender equality, learner attitude and motivation". Technology Integration into education is the means to actualize the 21st century skills that will make Nigeria become relevant in global market. We should not forget in a hurry the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic which necessitated the need to pay more attention to digital technology in schools.

Recommendation

Based on the foregoing discussions and conclusions, the following recommendations have been put forward

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria should recognize her youths in all areas of governance.
2. The Federal Government of Nigeria should fix the public power supply and provide free internet services to all schools to facilitate the delivery of technologies to schools.
3. The government should also subsidize the cost of these technologies such as cell phones and computers so that individual learners can afford them.
4. Ministries of Education and Boards should embark on the training and retraining of teachers by sponsoring study leaves, workshops, conferences and seminars on technologies for teaching and learning.
5. Teachers should be encouraged to embrace the 21st century pedagogy and integrate modern digital technologies into their instructional strategies. Their salaries and other welfare packages should be revisited positively.
6. There is an urgent need to restructure the existing curriculum at all levels of education to reflect 21st century skills and global best practices.
7. Students should be guided on the positive use of mobile technology devices to promote quality learning.

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