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DIGITALIZATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING AND THE CHALLENGES HAMPERING ITS SMOOTH FLOW

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ABSTRACT

Digitalization in teaching and learning is an aspect of emerging technology that became very prominent following the invasion of Covid-19 pandemic which swept across the globe. It is also an innovative teaching and learning that lends itself to technology and its vices. This is the reason it is referred to as the type of instructional practice that employs effective and efficient use of wide spectrum of technological practices which among others include; blended and virtual learning. Digitalization of teaching and learning has metamorphosed education to spatial level the education is now within the reach of everyone who desires it. Digitalization in teaching and learning is the merging of technology in the teaching and learning experiences which facilitates positive teaching and learning outcomes with distance notwithstanding. The study therefore seeks to explore the definition of digitalization of teaching, the role of digital technology in teaching and learning, digital resources in teaching and learning, the importance of digital teaching and learning, challenges of digital teaching and learning and the way forward.

Keywords: Digitalization, Teaching, Learning and Challenges.

Introduction

Prior to the digitalization of teaching and learning, traditional method of teaching which involves physical presence has been in use. This implies that the teacher and the students must have a meeting point/physical classroom for teaching and learning to take place. During that period, there much use of paper and other writing materials. There must be presence of erected structure termed classrooms with the school building. According to Ezeaku (2012); Okoye (2021);

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Ani, Iloka and Nwakoby, (2021), the mode of teaching and learning was mainly done using face to face contact. With the emergence of digitalization in teaching and learning, impartation of knowledge and skills which education imbue with learners becomes virtual. As noted by Okaforcha and Okeke (2019); Ezeaku (2012); Okeke (2023); Okoye (2018), the emerging technology in the world of education has made it possible for teaching and learning to take place without physical contact. Distance is thus not a barrier when virtual teaching/learning is involved.

Stemming from the above assertion, Ojimba (2021); Okaforcha and Okeke (2018); Ezeaku and Obikeze (2018) succinctly declared that most of the short-comings of traditional method of teaching and learning have been remedied by digital learning as it has created immediate classroom and speedy assessment among others. The immediate learning environment created by the virtual learning is the reason why education was kept vibrant during the time of Covid-19 pandemic. According to Nwogu and Nwakoby (2021); Ughamadu, Okaforcha and Okeke (2015), it made provision for students to study at the comfort of their homes, collaborate with their mates and involve in interactive sections with both their mates and the instructor. The instructor's job is stress free which promotes focus and participatory learning.

Definition of Digitalization of Teaching

According to Ibe (2019); Okoye (2017); Ezeaku (2013); Okoye and Ucheagwu-Okoye (2021), digitalization of teaching is the transformation of traditional method of teaching to electronically devised tools that keeps students engaged and focused for meaningful learning. This is because children are technologically complaisant and as such finds virtual learning more interesting. This is what prompted Chike Okosa, Ibe and Ojimba (2023); Okeke and Okaforcha (2018) to emphasize that educational landscape has expanded tremendously for better and improved academic performance. Digital teaching and learning make use of digital technology in form of internet-connected devices such as laptops, tablets, chromebooks, smartphones and many others.

According to Ilodigwe and Nwakoby (2021); Iloka (2021); Nwakoby (2023), digitalization in teaching and learning is simply the infusion of digital technology into the conventional teaching and learning which include online courses, virtual classrooms and digital textbooks. The scholar perceived digitalization of teaching and learning as playing a crucial role in revolution of education. It made provision for teaching and learning to take place anywhere without a physical meeting point. It provides the rudiments of education on the air which is electronically driven. Ojimba (2024); Okoye (2017); Okoye (2016); Nwakoby and Nwakoby (2023) described e-learning as the system of learning which deals with

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computer and internet forms void of physical presence of the teacher and student.

The Role of Digital Technology in Teaching and Learning

Digitalization in education has made a paradigm shift in the area of teaching and learning as observed by Okaforcha and Okeke (2018); Ezeaku (2019); Nwabashili, Iloka and Ucheagwu-Okoye (2022); Okeke (2022); Wang, Chen, Yu, Liu and Jing (2024) and Shaheen and Shaikh (2024);

1. It has made teaching and learning accessible to all irrespective location. It is digital technology has changed education from being done in a limited location to creation of various informal environments.
2. Digital technology has made it possible for learning to take place anytime and anywhere.
3. Digital education has notably advanced education time and space which has produced uniqueness in educational contexts with sustainability.
4. Digital technologies serve as knowledge supplier, source of information, mentors and assessors.
5. Students are already engulfed in the use of digital technology and using it for teaching and learning makes them more interested and fascinating thus increase their involvement.
6. It enables students to download needed information and upload content.
7. Web 2.0 technologies like wikis, podcasts and blogs extol content creation, collaboration, peer assessment and co-learning.
8. Digital technologies also support classroom strategies like gamification and flipped classrooms.

Digital Resources in Teaching and Learning

Digital teaching and learning cannot work in isolation of the digital implementation tools often referred to as the e-resources which enable the teachers and students to study in digital environment. Digital resources or e-resources is the elements of digital learning environment. In line with the above discourse, Okaforcha and Okeke (2019); Ezeaku (2014); Ucheagwu-Okoye and (2021) listed some of the digital teaching and learning resources to include; zoom, Google meet, Microsoft team and Learning Management Systems (LMSs), asynchronous online learning, digital learning resources, online learning, synchronous online learning:

a) Zoom; this is a learning outfit that deals with online learning environments which enables the instructor to live-stream class sessions. It also makes use of pre-recorded class sessions that could be shared with students at appointed date. Zoom is friendly with desktop computers, tablets and mobile devices for learners.
b) Google meet: Google meet is a virtual learning platform that utilizes video conferencing services and gives the participants the opportunity to join through audio, video, chat and screen. It could share screen with about hundred people with unlimited time.
c) Microsoft team: This is a virtual learning outfit that is filled with communication

app meant for educational purposes to promote collaboration and learning. It comes in various forms such as chat, assignments, class materials, video collaboration and notes. Although it is free, it requires active and valid email address.

d) Learning Management System (LMS): LMS is a virtual learning environment that is designed for record keeping and management. It is also used for knowledge management. It is a vital tool for organizational leadership in the administration of essential information and crucial roles. This has many types to select from because each type offers different features and capabilities. It is a software tool that permits creation, delivering and reporting on training courses and programmes.
e) Asynchronous online learning; this is student-oriented teaching strategy which allows learning to occur in different time and spaces for individual learners.
f) Digital learning resources; this is a kind of electronic or e-resources like applications (apps), software, programs or websites which not only engage students in teaching/learning encounter but also encourage effective learning outcome.
g) On-line learning: online learning is a virtual learning environment where instructions and learning take place over the internet with the use of digital learning devices. This digital resource provides the students to learn in exclusively internet environment. It enables students' study remotely and makes for good interaction between the educator and the students.
h) Synchronous online learning; this resource allows students to attend classes simultaneously and virtually at a scheduled time. It makes use of conferencing and online chatting. There is also room for question-and-answer session.

The importance of Digital Teaching and Learning

Iloka (2023); Nwakoby and Ilodigwe (2022); Ibe (2022); Ibe, Nwakoby and Ihediuche (2024).

Nwakoby (2024); Nwakoby and Chukwujekwu (2020); Kamalakannan (2024) outlined the following benefits of digital technologies in teaching and learning:

1. Increased access to educational resources; students have easy access to various forms of educational resources which makes it possible for them to study at their own pace.
2. Personalized learning encounter; students could learn on their own through adaptive platforms, making use of data analysis and employing Artificial Intelligence (AI) in project works. It also allows them to ascertain learning gaps thus proffer solution to them. It equally fosters critical thinking and problem solving.
3. Flexibility and Adaptability; digitalization in education creates room for suppleness in teaching/learning delivery process enabling students to

access information from anywhere and anytime.

4. Cost-effective; digitalization of teaching and learning reduces cost of physical resources requirements while online resources and platforms makes education accessible and affordable for students.

Challenges of Digital Teaching and Learning

Digitalizing teaching and learning have a very positive impact in improving learners' satisfaction and fostering problem solving among learners. However, there are some impediments hampering the smooth flow of digital teaching and learning as observed by Ojimba (2023); Okeke and Okaforcha (2020); Iloka (2022); Ebonam (2020) digital teaching and learning has been entrenched in the school curriculum but students still appear to be inaccessible to the devices for proper application in the teaching and learning delivery process. This is evinced by the financial constraints faced by public schools. It has also reflected in the purchase of digital devices for effective and efficient teaching/learning encounter. This has prompted most schools to ration the usage of these devices for both teachers and students use which has drastically affected the teaching/learning experience.

Moving further, Okaforcha and Okeke (2020); Ibe and Udeoji (2019) Ucheagwu-Okoye (2019); Roberts (2023): Shaheen and Shaikh (2024). reiterated that addiction and excessive reliance on gadgets are some of the challenges of digitalization of teaching and learning. In the scholars view point, the learners tend to be more addicted to their devices that they always press their device without ceasing. Moreover, they depend so much on their gadgets to store or save most of their data. If the gadgets get lost or corrupted, the entire saved data will be lost. Nwakoby and Nwakoby (2022); Ojimba (2020); Ehigiator and Ucheagwu-Okoye (2021) gave credence to the above assertion when the scholar reaffirmed that the problems of digitalization of teaching and learning include:

a) Intrusion of unsolicited messages: in the course of the teaching/learning process some unsolicited messages could crop up to interrupt the process thereby distracting the students' concentration and attentiveness.
b) The epileptic power supply; source of power supply in most cases cannot be guaranteed. Power failures could disrupt a flowing lesson and the lesson is missed as long as it lasts.
c) Digital devices are very expensive; due to the expensive nature of the digital devices, not many families are buoyant enough to provide them for their wards thus resulting in digital divide. This is the situation where the children from affluent homes have the devices while the ones from poor homes do not have resulting in knowledge dichotomy between the children of the rich and the poor. The cost of data could also pose a problem to the low-income families.
d) Lack of experts; this is another problem of digitalization of teaching and learning. There is insufficient number of experts to

handle the new innovation of digitalization of education and in most cases, the experts are none existent. This has led to the students' backwardness in digital world.

e) Other challenges are incessant network failures that could obstruct normal lessons, distractions from the family members during sessions, flat battery encounter during classes among others.

Conclusion

Digitalization of teaching and learning has made a remarkable landmark in the field of education. It has made teaching and learning to attain moveable dimensions such that one can access education from anywhere and anytime globally. This has in turn led to various digital technological devices that provide different functions the suit the learners' intentions/demands. Education under this yardstick involves interactive sessions, individualized studies and accelerated learning outcome.

Way Forward

In view of the afore mentioned challenges, the following suggestions were made;

1. Insufficient fund: The government and/or appropriate educational agency should deem it fit to allocate adequate fund to the public schools so as to enable them procure the devices needed both in quantity and quality for easy access to students.
2. Addiction to the gadgets: Students should be guided by both their teachers and parents to prevent gadgets addiction which is detrimental to their well-being and academic excellence. Let there be time allocated for the use of the device.
3. Over dependency on the digital device: most students depending on the device to store and save most of the essential data should also replicate in the hardcopy for easy retrieval in the event of loss of the gadget or corruption of the entire system.
4. Epileptic power supply: there is need for the school authority to provide alternative means of power supply such as solar powered energy or generating set.
5. Since the devices are expensive, the government should provide digital device for all the students since there is existence of social classes to avoid denying children from poor socio-economic background from benefiting from the digital teaching and learning.
6. There is absolute need for the government to trained adequate number of experts that will take up the digitalization of teaching and learning. This is to prevent quacks from confusing the learners.
7. Students/learners are advised to ensure their batteries are fully charged before the beginning of the lesson to avoid the issue of flat battery.

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