The Role of Digital Technology in Promoting Continuing Education in The Context of The Principles of Lifelong Learning in Nigeria

Abidoye A. SARUMI[1]
Department of Adult Education
Faculty of Education
University of Ibadan, Nigeria
bidoye2004@gmail.com

Solomon O. OJEDEJI[2]
Centre for Literacy, Training and Development Programme for Africa (CLTDPA)
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
so.ojedeji@ui.edu.ng; solomonojedeji@gmail.com
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5193-0940

Abstract

Continuing education, a type of educational curriculum that continues some form of previous learning, is designed to deepen an individual's previous education in order to finish, rectify, improve on, adapt to a new degree of demand, or complement it. This could involve expanding chances for reading and writing, as well as continuing learning and training for young people and adults after completing full-time studies or withdrawing from such programmes. Continuing education is subsumed under lifelong learning, which is the process of accumulating knowledge, skills, and competences throughout a person's life, from childhood through adulthood and beyond. Thus, continuing education is founded on the principles of lifelong learning, which is why it is difficult to discuss continuing education without making reference to the principles of lifelong learning. The principles of lifetime learning are guiding concepts and values that underpin the philosophy and practice of lifelong learning. These concepts serve as a framework for comprehending the significance of lifelong learning and how it can be properly implemented. Meanwhile, the current and continuous technological improvements have greatly benefited continuing education. Advancements in technology have made individualised, self-directed continuing education possible. By aligning digital advancements with the principles of lifelong learning, this paper underscores the potential for digital technology to foster an inclusive and sustainable educational ecosystem in Nigeria, ultimately contributing to national development and global competitiveness. This paper is thus an exploration of possibilities in maximising digital technologies for continuing education based on the principles of lifelong learning.

Keywords: Digital Technology, Continuing Education, Lifelong Learning, Self-directed Learning

Introduction

Continuing education is a type of education that continues some form of previous learning. Typically, this type of education is designed to deepen an individual's previous education in order

to finish, rectify, improve on, adapt to a new degree of demand, or complement it. Continuing education, according to Olaniran and Ojo (2023) is the extension or supply of educational opportunities to non-traditional learners. This could involve expanding chances for reading and writing, as well as continuing education and training for young people and adults after completing full-time studies or withdrawing from such programmes. Special schools, institutions, or institutes that prioritise flexibility over standard or rigid academic curriculum could provide continuing education. Thus, individuals can update, retrain, or acquire new knowledge and skills in certain industries or jobs through continuing education programmes (Alt & Raichel, 2020).

Adedokun-Shittu and Shittu (2022) defined continuing education as extra-mural, continuing, or lifelong education that is typically provided by universities, volunteer organisations, or private individuals to workers, school dropouts, and those who missed earlier opportunities provided in the formal school system. Similarly, similar programmes might be designed to prepare various groups of people for government-approved and organised examinations for job and educational progress.

Yusuff and Soyemi (2022) described continuing education as post-experience vocational education for persons with or without job in order to learn new knowledge and skills, prepare for new responsibilities, and improve communication and study skills. As a result, continuing education is viewed as a viable course in the field of adult education as an academic and professional discipline. Since education is viewed as a lifetime learning process that extends from the cradle to the grave and beyond. Thus, continuing education can take the shape of educational activities, most of which are part-time in nature, that are purposefully intended and organised to address specific needs ranging from occupational and professional capabilities to personal and leadership development (Olumorin, Fakomogbon & Yusuf, 2020).

Continuing education is stated to have an infinite reach because it caters to the old and young, as well as the rich and needy, by mixing formal and non-formal education (Olaniran & Ojo, 2023). Similarly, continuing education activities are not terminal in nature, but rather an ongoing process that may never be completed. This is because learning continues regardless of an individual's age, social standing, academic achievement, or professional skill. Furthermore, we live in a dynamic

culture, especially in light of technology breakthroughs, where continual skill growth is required to deal or thrive in the progressive environment in which we function on a daily basis.

Through numerous educational courses and trainings, continuing education has played a significant role in the acquisition of information and skills. As a sort of educational curriculum designed for school dropouts, the underprivileged, the educationally disadvantaged, and the backward, continuing education has provided a means for diverse groups of people to better themselves and their level of living. Similarly, through continuing education, elementary school graduates who did not have the opportunity to complete secondary school are given the essential learning experiences to write SSCE or GCE exams. Such individuals have frequently secured admission to preferred higher education institutions in Nigeria or overseas. As a result, many primary and secondary school graduates who would otherwise have been hoodlums in our society due to a lack of appropriate additional engagements have been assisted in acquiring information, skills, and training through continuing education (Yusuff & Soyemi, 2022).

Furthermore, continuing education supplements the formal education system, particularly through coaching centres that the majority of secondary school students attend during the holidays, which have been especially beneficial to slow learners by allowing them to catch up with others and perform better in examinations. People can also change their discipline through continuing education. For example, there have been multiple cases where persons with an artistic or commercial bent switched completely to science through continuing education. People who are already working have benefited much from continuing education through workshops, seminars, and conferences. Many of them have benefited from such training programmes to refresh their knowledge and abilities (Olaniran & Ojo, 2023).

Historical Background of Continuing Education in Nigeria
Globally, continuing education is traceable to workers' education, a type of education that enables workers to expand their productive capabilities in order to grasp the day-to-day difficulties that they face at work. The origin of continuing education in Nigeria is, however, traceable to the efforts of early missionaries in the 18th century in Nigeria, who were only concerned with establishing and extending their religious activities. These missionaries quickly discovered how impossible it was to achieve their goal without some type of basic literacy. This resulted in the organisation of basic literacy training in the 3Rs of reading, writing, and numerating, which improved the

knowledge and communication skills of teachers, interpreters, messengers, cooks, and stewards (Sarumi, 2011). For example, learners were instructed to help with building construction, plant maintenance, furniture creation, and food production, among other things (Sarumi, 2011; Olumorin, Fakomogbon & Yusuf, 2020).

In particular, the University College, Ibadan (now University of Ibadan), which was founded in 1948, launched an important push to provide labour education. As a result of the collaboration of trade unions and the government, the University's Extra-Mural Studies Department began, in the early 1950s, to organise courses for trade unionists in order to address the requirements of workers and their union. Thus, the University of Ibadan's participation in workers' education arose from adult education work. The Extramural Department began a network of labour education activities in 1962 (Afolayan, Akomolafe & Olaniyan, 2021).

The Principles of Lifelong Learning as Basis for Continuing Education

The principles of lifetime learning are guiding concepts and values that underpin the philosophy and practise of lifelong learning. These concepts serve as a framework for comprehending the significance of lifelong learning and how it can be properly implemented. According to Atchoarena and Howells (2021), the following are the key concepts of lifelong learning:

Learning is a Lifelong Journey: Lifelong learning acknowledges that education and personal growth do not end with formal schooling and continue throughout a person's life. It emphasises that learning is a continuous process that takes place in a variety of contexts, ranging from formal education to informal experiences.

Self-Directed Learning: The emphasis of lifelong learning is on the learner's autonomy and responsibility for their own learning. Individuals are encouraged to take the initiative, establish learning objectives, and actively pursue knowledge and skills that are relevant to their interests and requirements.

Adaptability and Flexibility: Lifelong learners must be flexible to new conditions and difficulties since the world is continuously changing. The notion of adaptability encourages people to learn new things and develop new talents in order to stay relevant and productive in their personal and professional lives.

Diversity of Learning Opportunities: Lifelong learners must be flexible to new situations and difficulties since the world is continuously changing. The adaptation concept encourages people to learn new things and develop new talents in order to stay relevant and productive in their personal and professional lives.

Inclusion and Accessibility: Lifelong learning encourages everyone, regardless of age, background, social level, or physical ability, to have equal access to knowledge. It advocates for reducing learning barriers and making education available to all.

Continual Reflection and Improvement: Lifelong learners constantly examine and reflect on their own learning development. This principle enables people to discover areas for development and adjust their learning practises accordingly.

Application of Learning: The emphasis of lifelong learning is on the practical application of learned knowledge and skills in real-life circumstances. It is not just about gathering information; it is also about efficiently applying it to solve issues and make educated decisions.

Collaborative and Social Learning: Lifelong learning values learning from others and promotes collaboration and social engagement. Peer learning, group conversations, and networking bring significant insights and viewpoints.

Embracing Failure and Mistakes: Making mistakes is a natural aspect of the learning process for lifelong learners. Failures do not discourage them; instead, they regard them as chances for growth and learning.

Learning for Personal Fulfilment: Lifelong learning extends beyond the acquisition of job-related skills. It acknowledges education as a means of enriching one's life, stimulating curiosity, and fostering personal growth and fulfilment.

Awareness of Learning Styles: Lifelong learners are encouraged to become familiar with their preferred learning styles and to personalise their learning experiences to their specific requirements and preferences.

Cultivating Critical Thinking: Lifelong learning fosters critical thinking and the ability to critically assess knowledge. It promotes people to examine their assumptions, challenge their views, and seek evidence-based information.

Individuals who embrace these concepts can foster a mindset of continual learning, which is necessary for personal development, career success, and active participation in an ever-changing world. Lifelong learning enables people to adapt, grow, and prosper throughout their lives, improving their own experiences and making important contributions to society (Alt & Raichel, 2020; Robinson, 2020).

Driving Continuing Education through Digital Technology

The current and ongoing technological improvements have greatly benefited continuing education. For example, it got to the point where a self-directed type of learning style of continuing education was popularised through the use of Computer-assisted Instruction (CAI). The CAI is a form of individualised teaching in which a learner works at his or her own speed using technology tools that allow a learner to read, write, or attend classes virtually from a phone or computer screen. This also gives learners with quick feedback from the instructor during training (Ashraf, Tsegay, & Meijia, 2021; Atchoarena & Howells, 2021).

Similarly, video-conferencing innovation has had a significant impact on what we do in continuing education. Video-conferencing, a technology that permits participation in face-to-face continuing education, has enabled the provision of continuing educational opportunities to overcome the barriers of time and distance (Adelore & Ojedeji, 2019). This allows instructors and students to engage over great distances and time zones via electronic mail and more contemporary social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, Telegram, Twitter, and others. This innovative continuing education system has enabled participants from all over the world to deliver or attend international trainings, seminars, or conferences on a variety of topics such as education, health, and finance (Bragg, Walsh, & Heyeres, 2021; Adelore & Ojedeji, 2022).

Digital technology has significantly transformed the landscape of continuing education, providing new avenues for learning, collaboration, and skill development. According to Arinaitwe (2021), Digital technology has revolutionised continuing education by breaking down geographical barriers, providing flexibility, personalising learning experiences, and incorporating innovative tools and methods to enhance engagement and skill development. The ongoing evolution of digital technology is likely to further shape the future of continuing education, making it more accessible, dynamic, and effective.

Below are some of the ways in which digital technology drives continuing education as identified by Adelore and Ojedeji (2022):

1. Online Courses and Learning Platforms

Digital technology enables individuals to access a wide range of courses and educational resources from anywhere in the world. Online platforms like Coursera, edX, Udacity, and Khan Academy offer courses on diverse subjects, making education more accessible to a global audience. In the words of Adelore and Ojedeji (2019), many students in Nigeria (in the face of the current economic hardship and high rate of unemployment), have maximised and continued to maximise opportunities provided through these online courses. Thus, through online courses and learning platforms, several learners can access course materials at their own pace. This allows for flexibility in scheduling and accommodating diverse learning styles. This asynchronous learning model is particularly beneficial for working professionals seeking to enhance their skills.

2. Virtual Classrooms and Webinars

Virtual classrooms and webinars facilitate real-time interaction between learners and instructors. This allows for live discussions, Q&A sessions, and collaboration, simulating a traditional classroom experience without the need for physical presence. Digital platforms also make it easier to bring industry experts and guest lecturers into the virtual classroom, providing learners with insights from professionals in the field.

3. Adaptive Learning Systems

Digital technology enables the development of adaptive learning systems that tailor content to individual learners based on their progress, strengths, and weaknesses. This personalised approach enhances the effectiveness of education by catering to individual needs.

4. Gamification and Interactive Learning

Digital technology allows for the integration of gamification elements into educational content, making learning more engaging and interactive. This approach can enhance motivation and retention of information by incorporating elements of competition, rewards, and interactivity.

5. Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR)

AR and VR technologies provide immersive experiences, allowing learners to engage in realistic simulations and practical training. This is especially valuable in fields where hands-on experience is crucial, such as healthcare, manufacturing, and technical professions.

6. Mobile Learning

The prevalence of smartphones and tablets enables learners to access educational content on the go. Mobile apps and responsive websites provide a seamless learning experience, allowing individuals to continue their education regardless of their location.

How Digital Technology Promotes Lifelong Learning

Digital technology plays a crucial role in promoting lifelong learning, fostering a culture of continuous education and skill development throughout an individual's life. In the words of Alt and Raichel (2020), digital technology serves as a powerful enabler for lifelong learning, breaking down barriers to education, providing flexible and personalised learning experiences, and fostering continuous skill development. The continuous advancement in technology, and the resultant progress in digital education continues to contribute to a culture of lifelong learning, empowering individuals to adapt to change, pursue their passions, and remain competitive in a dynamic and rapidly evolving world.

Adelore and Ojedeji (2019) provide the following ways through which digital technology facilitates and promotes lifelong learning:

1. Open Educational Resources (OER): Digital technology has enabled the creation and dissemination of open educational resources, providing freely accessible learning materials such as textbooks, lectures, and simulations. This democratises access to information and supports self-directed learning.

2. Blended Learning: The integration of digital tools in traditional classrooms creates a blended learning environment, combining face-to-face interactions with online resources. This approach caters to diverse learning styles and preferences.

3. AI-driven Recommendations: Platforms often use artificial intelligence to analyse a learner's preferences and performance, offering personalised recommendations for courses, modules, or resources that align with their interests and goals.

4. Online Communities and Virtual Collaboration Tools: Digital platforms facilitate the creation of online communities where learners can connect, share knowledge, and collaborate. Discussion forums, social media groups, and collaborative tools enhance the social aspect of learning, fostering a sense of community among lifelong learners. Digital technology provides tools for virtual collaboration, enabling learners to work together on projects, share insights, and engage in group activities, even if they are geographically dispersed.

7. Adaptation to Industry Changes: Digital platforms often collaborate with industry experts to offer courses and certifications that are directly relevant to current industry needs. This adaptability ensures that lifelong learners can stay updated on the latest trends and technologies in their respective fields.

9. Global Networking Opportunities: Digital technology facilitates global networking and collaboration, allowing individuals to connect with experts, mentors, and peers from around the world. This global perspective enriches the learning experience and exposes individuals to diverse perspectives.

10. Career Transition Support: Lifelong learners often use digital platforms for upskilling or reskilling to stay relevant in their careers. Job-oriented training programmes and certifications offered online can help individuals transition to new roles or industries. Some digital platforms go beyond education and offer job placement assistance, connecting learners with employment opportunities based on their newly acquired skills.

Conclusion

The importance of continuing education in terms of national growth cannot be overstated. Many industrialised nations around the world, including the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Russia, and France, have benefited and continue to profit greatly from the contribution of continuing education to national development. For example, there are countries that take human capital development, which is a major focus of continuing education, very seriously. They

recognise that no nation can fully progress beyond its citizenry's knowledge base, thus they spend heavily in their people's continued education.

Recommendations

1. The Nigerian government, as well as governments in other developing nations, can benefit from industrialised countries' massive investments in human capital development via continuing education programmes.

2. Since no nation can be described as developed or developing if its citizens are not adequately educated to meet the challenges of the modern era, the Nigerian government should ensure that as resources are allocated to infrastructure development, equivalent amounts are also allocated to government sponsored lifelong and continuing education programmes across the federation.

3. Committees could be formed by governmental or non-governmental organisations, with the responsibility of ensuring that educational programme planning includes not just formal education, but also continuous and lifetime learning.

4. Nigerian citizens might be encouraged to take use of chances for ongoing and lifetime learning in order to fulfil the needs of an ever-changing society.

5. Since continuing education, which is based on lifelong learning, caters to all demographics - young and old, skilled and unskilled workers, farmers, artisans, and school dropouts, among others - it could be embraced by governments at all levels for the transformation of people's lives and preparing them to meet the demands of our globalised and ever-changing world.

References

Adedokun-Shittu, N. A., & Shittu, A. J. K. (2022). Digital technology and lifelong learning in Nigeria: Opportunities and challenges. Journal of Learning for Development, 9(1), 45-60. Retrieved on July 26, 2024 https://jl4d.org/index.php/ejl4d/article/view/544

Adelore, O. O. and Ojedeji, S. O. (2019). Widening access to learning in cities of the twenty first century. In Biao, I. (Ed.). *Learning Cities, Town Planning, and the Creation of Livelihoods.* IGI Global, USA.

Adelore, O. O. and Ojedeji, S. O. (2022). Digital literacy: Key to equity and social justice in a tech-dependent world. In: Robinson PA, Williams KV, Stojanovic M. (Eds). *Global Citizenship for Adult Education: Advancing Critical Literacies for Equity and Social Justice.* USA: Routledge.

Admiraal, W., Schenke, W., De Jong, L., Emmelot, Y., and Sligte, H. (2021). Schools as professional learning communities: what can schools do to support professional development of their teachers? *Professional Development on Education* 47, 684–698.

Afolayan, T. I., Akomolafe, C. O., & Olaniyan, O. M. (2021). The impact of mobile learning on continuing education among adult learners in Nigeria. International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning, 13(2), 18-32. Retrieved on July 26, 2024 https://doi.org/10.4018/IJMBL.2021040102

Alghazi, S. S., Kamsin, A., Almaiah, M. A., Wong, S. Y., and Shuib, L. (2021). For sustainable application of mobile learning: an extended UTAUT model to examine the effect of technical factors on the usage of mobile devices as a learning tool. *Sustainability* 13:1856.

Alt, D., and Raichel, N. (2020). Problem-based learning, self-and peer assessment in higher education: towards advancing lifelong learning skills. *Research Papers in Education* 37, 1-25.

Arinaitwe, D. (2021). Practices and strategies for enhancing learning through collaboration between vocational teacher training institutions and workplaces. *Empirical. Research on Vocational Education and Training.* 13, 1–22.

Ashraf, M. A., Tsegay, S. M., and Meijia, Y. (2021). Blended learning for diverse classrooms: qualitative experimental study with in-service teachers. *SAGE Open*

Atchoarena, D. and Howells, A. (2021). Advancing learning cities: Lifelong learning and the creation of a learning society. In *Powering a Learning Society During an Age of Disruption* (pp. 165–180). Springer, Singapore.

Barrow, L. and Cecilia E. R. (2013). *Financial incentives and educational investment: The impact of performance-based scholarships on student time use*. Working paper No. 19351. Cambridge, MA, National Bureau of Economic Research.

Blaschke, L. M. (2021). The dynamic mix of heutagogy and technology: Preparing learners for lifelong learning. *British Journal of Educational Technology,* 52(4), 1629-1645.

Bragg, L., Walsh, C., and Heyeres, M. (2021). Successful design and delivery of online professional development for teachers: a systematic review of the literature. Computer. *Education*. 166:104-158

Olaniran, S. O., & Ojo, D. A. (2023). Leveraging digital tools for lifelong learning in Nigeria: A focus on e-learning platforms. International Journal of Education and Development Using Information and Communication Technology, 19(2), 85-99. Retrieved on July 26, 2024 https://ijedict.dec.uwi.edu/viewarticle.php?id=2982

Olumorin, C. O., Fakomogbon, M. A., & Yusuf, A. (2020). E-learning adoption for lifelong learning in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. Asian Journal of Distance Education, 15(1), 112-127. Retrieved on July 26, 2024 http://www.asianjde.org/ojs/index.php/AsianJDE/article/view/410

Robinson, P.A. (2020). *The Critical Literacies Advancement Model (CLAM): A framework for promoting positive social change.* Available at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/

Sarumi, A. A. (2011). *Contemporary Issues in Historical Foundations of Adult Education.* Ibadan University Publishing House

Yusuff, A. A., & Soyemi, J. (2022). Digital inclusion and the future of continuing education in Nigeria. Education and Information Technologies, 27(4), 4235-4251. Retrieved on July 26, 2024 https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10731-w