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BLENDED LEARNING AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY FORFUNCTION EDUCATION AMONG MIGRANT FISHER MEN: ATOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND LIFE LONGLEARNING

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Abstract: Blended learning is a hybrid of face-to-face instruction and computer mediated instruction. It allows for self-paced learning and also gives desired information easily. Learners also have access to learning facilities as well. The migrant fishermen in the coastal and river line do fishing in 46, 300km2 of maritime are and 125,470.82km2 of inland water bodies. Though they contribute a lot to domestic fish consumption in Nigeria, they live in deplorable condition with their offspring's with no access to good formal education. The major challenge has been the terrain but with improvement in instructional technologies and strategies,these problems can be surmounted. This paper is presenting blended learning as an instructional strategy to let them have access to functional education for sustainable development in this region. The challenges include lack of adequate manpower, steady network availability, security issues among some others is highlighted.Recommendation such as concerted efforts and adequate funding were highlighted as some steps on the right direction to ensure blended learning as a tool in giving these fisher folk basic education, make them more functional and also to ensure lifelong learning for sustainable development
Keywords: Functional education, migrant fisherman, sustainable development and lifelong learning.

Introduction

Education is not just a tool for literacy but also a tool for sustainable development.The downward economic trend in the world affecting different countries have made it necessary for each country to go back to the drawing board for solution. The chambers 21st century dictionary (2004) defines "function" as meaning "in working order" of "operation". Since education is the basic tool for the development of the individual and country in general, it means education must be functional to meet this goal.

Functional educational therefore can be seen as an educational system that is working, operational and useful in any given environment. For instance teaching an individual fishing skills in an open desert cannot be regarded as a functional system of education.

Education is a catalyst for socio-economic, Political, technological advancement and development of a nation. No nation can develop beyond its educational standard or level. In order words education is the key index to economic and social development of a country.

This means school programmers need to be relevant, practical, and comprehensive while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in education for the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the society. This suggests, teaching

and learning for these ages need a creative education based on individual needs and abilities to be functional.

Agbowuro, Saidu and Jimuwan (2017) further state that to cultivate and educate the right minds, we need educational curricula that include exploration, problem solving and diversity. It is important that school systems respond to the changing world. There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive and United Nations. To this end school programmer need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive for the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

One cannot talk of a functional education without creativity. Creativity is the entire process by which ideas are generated, developed and transformed into values. It comprises both innovation and entrepreneurship (Agboworo et al 2017). It is the process of developing ideas that are original and of value. Creative intelligence is dynamic, diverse and distinct. It is been imaginative or inventive, taking risks or challenging convention. Researchers and educational writers have extended the general meaning of creativity so that it incorporates ideas about inventiveness and imagination.

This gives the idea that creativity is not simply about coming up with

big ideas but coming up with practical solutions to everyday problems and then applying them to real life situation. Creative education is based on individual needs and abilities. It requires freedom of learning with teaching. An active mode of learning influences innovative personality development which creates something unique. Functional education is the process through which individuals are made to be participating members of their society. It enables them to become capable of living in the society and to contribute towards it economic development (Ocho, 2005) in Unachukwu, 2007. This shows that a functional education system takes cognizance of the dynamics of the labour market, equips the graduates with occupational skills and competencies to enable them to be self-reliant.

Funtional education is an holistic educational experience that is focused on the identification of situational problems, gathering of information to make decisions in a world of challenges and realities of life, enhancing users and end users to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes to showcase new concepts as a vehicle of globalizing such countries or state for meaningful co-existence, sustainability and developments (Adewale, 2014).

Functional education should be capable of producing Nigerians who can manufacture raw materials, machines and tools needed for local and international markets, invent new designs, discover drugs capable of curing disease hitherto incurable and transform the nation from consumption to manufacturing status (Udo&Akpa, 2014 in Agbowuro et al 2017).

Blended Learning as an Instructional Strategy

Instructional strategies are the prescribed sequences and methods of instruction to achieve a learning objective source. The instructional process can mar or bear up the implementation of a given curriculum. One thing is to plan a curriculum while such a curriculum will be successful or not require a lot of planning for effective implementation.

The government in a bid to meet up with the dynamic nature of society reviews the curriculum periodically.

Human beings consciously or unconsciously keep on learning. This has led to the concept of lifelong learning. Educational advocates of life long education are of the opinion that education is a process that continues in one form or another throughout life.

Learning is promoted when learners are engaged in solving real world problems when existing knowledge is activated as foundation for a new knowledge demonstrated to the learner, applied by the learner and integrated into the leaner's world (Merril, 2002).

Prensky (2001) is of the opinion that digital natives also referred to as the millennial generation expect the immediacy of technology, collaborative learning opportunities

and personal technologies as a way of life and the internet is more important to them than the television. On the other side of the divide are the learners who will prefer a traditional direct teaching or face-to-face instructions.

It is quite clear that no single mode of delivery system that can provide sufficient choices, engagement, social contact, relevance and context needed to facilitate successful learning and performance (Carner 2010).

This is because learning environment has affordances that facilitates or constrain different types of interactions and activities (Garrison &Kanuta 2007). Though much can be learned and synthesized from research in both distance and traditional learning environments, blended environments provide a paradigm that is different than just a linear combination of the two. (Graham and Dziuban, 2008) For instance reactions to the use of computer-mediated discussions can be quite different in a course that also meets face-to-face versus a completely online course.

Blended learning offers range of possibilities by combining internet and digital media with established classroom forms that requires the physical co-pressure of both the teacher and students. It is a formal teaching and learning approach that combines in the most efficient manner, teaching and learning activities of both the traditional fact-to-face (brick-and-mortar)

classroom like environment and online virtual environmental (Friesen 2012) and harnessing the strengths of each into a unique learning experience that is in agreement with the desired outcome.

In other words, it is an interface of traditional direct teaching or face-to-face and the computer mediated technologies and therefore gives room for some form of flexibility of time and space thereby encouraging individualized and self-paced learning. The diagram below depicts the interface or interaction of this hybrid instructional strategy.
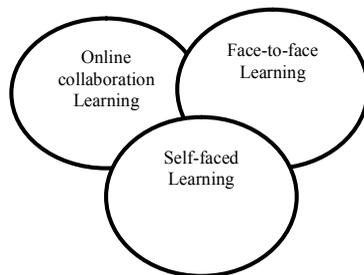
Source: Halilu&Siliki (2017)

Blended learning is creating a learning environment that combines face-to-face instruction with technology-mediated instruction (Graham, 2006).

Traditional face-to-face instruction involves interactions between instructors and learners who are in the same place while technology-mediated instruction uses information and communication technologies) mediate and instructor be located together.

Blended learning also referred to as hybrid environment improves learning effectiveness, increased access and convenience and greater cost effectiveness has shown from research findings (Halilu&Siliki 2017).

Blended learning approaches are used to find gains and trade-offs in comparison with strictly traditional settings or entirely distributed settings or entirely distributed environments. This makes it a suitable choice for migrant fishermen camps.

Blended learning takes the best of both worlds of face-to-face and technology mediated instruction. A note is necessary here because it can also be a weakness if the focus in entirely on the mode of instruction rather than the holistic nature of the learning experience. (Kross, 2006).

Garrison and Kanuta, (2007) are of the opinion that for blended learning to reach its full transformational potential, the primary goal should be rethinking and redesigning the teaching and learning relationship improve pedagogy with efficiency and convenience as possible secondary benefits. Blended learning must capitalize on the strengths of both online and face-to-face modalities to create a more active learning environment.

Benefits of Blended Learning to the Migrant Learners at fishing camp

The present age is a period where the need is not just to access knowledge but also a timely access to relevant knowledge that one can put to functional use. This is what

has given ICT its prominence. Blended learning offers multiple delivery media that are designed to complement each other and promotes learning.

Garrison and Vaughan (2008) view blended learning as a thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences. The benefits of face-to-face and online written communication are optimally integrated in such a way that the strengths of each are blended into a unique learning experience congruent with the context and intended educational purpose.

Blended learning is a composition of various event-based activities such as self-paced learning, live e-learning and face-to-face classrooms.

Self-paced activities can be taken at the learners' leisure irrespective of time and place. It is what the learner does by accessing the e-learning process via internet.

The benefit of self-paced online learning is not only that it can reach everyone at anytime and anywhere but that it can teach the learner appropriately, providing the right skills at the right time.

This will be of utmost benefit to the learners at migrant fishing camps as live e-learning takes place in a virtual classroom at a schedule time at which learners undertake to attend. This will enable the learners to collaborate with one another, share ideas, and ask questions and present gray areas or learning difficulties.

The e-learning facets of the blended learning environment can

be created at the fishing camps and can be enhanced by bringing experts online, give fast access to information for quick reaction, connect students with colleagues or experts both in and outside the learning environment. It also affords these learners in the fishing camps the privilege of personalized learning as each student selects his or her activities from a personal menu of learning opportunities most relevant to his or her background, job or carrier. It enables these learners access to learning events from many sources enabling the learner to select a favoured format or learning method or tracing provider and enabling the organizations to form learning communities.

Migrant fishermen are classified under nomadic education. Nomadic education is the basic education provided to the children of the disadvantaged nomadic population in the country. The nomads are classified into three groups which are: the nomadic pastoralist, the migrant fisher folks and the migrant farmers.

The goals of nomadic education according to the national policy of education (2013) are:

Provide the nomads with relevant and functional basic education and;

Improve the survival skills of nomads by providing them with knowledge   and skills that will enable them raise their productivity and levels of income and also participate effectively in the nations socio-economic and political affairs.

A migrant fisherman is one who leaves his natural community and moves from one habitation to another in fulfillment of his occupation. He moves in search of fish as dictated by the type of fish required, the movement of the tide and season of the year. The migration entails the shifting of both place of work and residence of the family of one mover, to the new settlement. These movements endanger plans to build permanent educational structure unfeasible and so non-formal alternatives to education were sought for.

In 1990, the concept of migrant fishermen gained prominence after the program for the education of children of migrant fishermen were nationally recognized and placed under the auspices of the National Commission for Nomadic Education of Nigeria. (Tawari, 2002) Nemine and Torunarigha (2012).

Causes of Migration

In Nigeria there are more than six coastal and riverine occupation folks fishing in 46,300km of maritime area and 125,470.82km of inland water bodies (Alagoa 1999).

In many Ijaw communities which occupy the coastal region of the Niger Delta, stick houses are built close fertile fishing fronts which are then abandoned when the resources have been depleted, although sometimes the timber wood from the main structural frame is taken and re-used if it is still strong enough and in a manageable condition.

The few studies carried out among these Ijaw migrant fishermen,

opined that these fisher folks relocated on a consistent pattern and that families migrated from one fishing camp or village to another during various fishing periods and in response to various changes in tides. Tawari, Sikoki and Otobetekere in Nemine and Torunarigha (2011) gave a detailed explanation to fish movements and the resulting fishermen migration it engenders.

They posted that fishermen take advantage of seasoned distribution patterns, influenced by three main factors which are moon phases, water currents and fish behaviour, all of which are intuitively discerned and knowledge about them is traditionally transmitted through successive generations. Moon phases are said to be instrumental in bringing in larger species due to high water levels of bimonthly spring tides, occurring three to four days (3-4 days) before the new moon and low water levels taking place in similar intervals. The causative factor is attributed to the alignment of the new moon and full moon with the sun on water currents. The researchers stated that during the raining season (May - September) rough conditions in the sea restricts fishing operations to the canoe fishermen; causing many of them to resort to fishing in creeks and estuaries and that during this time, fishing activity is noticeable in the brackish water zone. On the other hand, fish behaviour is said to vary among several existing stocks in the areas and could follow the various depths at which they dwell. Also, there is the movement of fish into flood plain following fast flow flood water, and low oxygen tolerant fishes in swamps or inshore lakes that flow in with the flood are trapped after flood recedes.

The cyclical pattern of the fishermen in response to this mechanism obtained from time geography survey analysis is presented below.

February to June Deep Sea/ offshore fishing

December to January

Home base
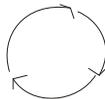
July to December Creek/ Onshore fishing

The above portrays the typical migrant cycle for Ijaw fishermen in the riverine and coastal communities of the Niger Delta Area in Nigeria. This implies in designing instruction for the learners in this migrant fishing camps, this cyclical pattern should be put in considerations.

Challenges

Some of the challenges in the use of the blended learning for migrant fishermen are highlighted below:

I. Inadequate facilities: The provision of adequate facilities in the various fishing camps for effective instruction using blended learning.

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II. Insufficient Skilled manpower: skilled manpower is not equally available which also pose a challenge.

III. Rural urban drift: Desire of urban Centre's has led to urban drift even among the working class has most manipulate their transfers from rural settings in order to remain in the cities thus many rural schools lack teachers while those in the cities are over staffed.

IV. Security issues: Security problems will also be a main challenge because of sea piracy, theft and militants that cause disruption of economic activities in the area which can inturn affect any educational activity in such camps.

V. Poor planning: Poor planning and fire brigade approach to educational issues will make proper implementation difficult.

VI. The geographical terrain raises a lot of accessibility problems.

VII. Poor network: Network connectivity issues may arise for the computer mediated instruction.

VIII. Poor values on importance to literacy: Poor enlightenment among the migrant fishing folks on benefit of literacy and functional education will be a major issue for proper implementation.

Recommendations

There is no terrain that cannot be conquered and structures put in place if there is willingness and fund to do so. The following recommendations are made as the way forward.

I. Adequate funding by the interest bodies and stake holders not left for the government alone.

II. Non-governmental organizations (NGO) should be made to see the plight of these migrant fisher men and their children so as to solicit support for them particularly in the area of functional education for their immediate use.

III. There should be extra allowances attached to teachers posted to these fishing camps to make up the difficulties envisaged.

IV. Security operatives should be attached to such facilities so as to prevent them from being vandalized.

V. Enlightenments and sensitization should be carried out not just in rural settings but also brought to these camps on the need for literacy and functional education.

VI. Different network systems should be made to build their masts in this area to facilitate adequate network for the computer mediated programmes.

Conclusion

There are urgent needs to integrate the migrant fishermen into the main stream development programme and functional education is the weapon to achieve it. This will go a long way to curb the excesses of the unguided youths, many who are not even literate and likely offspring of this migrant's fisherman. It is only a well-designed instructional strategy that can be used to facilitate functional strategy that can be used to facilitate functional education especially mass literacy in this region. It is only when this is done that the goals of stainable development and lifelong learning can be achieved.

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