

THE PERCEPTION OF ADULT LEARNERS TOWARDS THE USE OF COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY IN ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN AKURE METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to find out the perception of adult learners towards the use of computer technology in adult and non-formal education programmes in Akure metropolis. The study adopted the survey research method. Three hundred and twenty (320) adult learners made up the population and sample size for the study using the purposive sampling technique. The questionnaire was the instrument used to gather information from the participants. The validity of the instrument was ascertained through the expert judgment approach while test re-test method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. A reliability index of 0.65 was obtained through the Pearson product moment correlation formula. Findings from the study revealed that Adult Learners with the use of computer technology can learn whatever they want to learn at any time and at their convenience. It was also observed that there is no difference in the perception of male and female adults using computer technology. The adult learners agreed that computer technology have made adult learners more interested in learning, enhanced adult's participation in their community, made them better citizen and also improved their spellings through the computer spell check. Findings also showed that the use of computer technology is hampered with inadequate computers, irregular power supply and lack of computer skills. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the learning interest of the adults should be sustained by encouraging them and making computers available for use during learning process and also alternative power supply should be provided.

Keyword: Perception, adult learners, computer technology and adult education programmes.

INTRODUCTION

Adult education is a programme of instruction for adult persons. They could be formal, informal or non-formal in nature to enable mature persons attain self-development and competence in all ramification. According to Omeje, (2012), Adult and Non formal education programmes are the oldest forms of education that started thousands of years ago with Adam in the Garden of Eden; where he was instructed by God. Adult education is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustainable self-educating activities in order to gain new form of knowledge, skills, attitudes or values (Hall & Oates Song, 2015). It can mean any form of learning adults engage in beyond traditional schooling.

Adult and Non-formal education programmes could be seen as encompassing all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school system such as literacy, remedial and vocational education. It is a key in the making of not just a functional adult but also the neglected and disadvantage group (Omage, 2012). Non-formal education connotes alternative to schooling, hence the term out of school education (Okedara & Bowen, 2001). Thus, non-formal education covers training and instructions, out of formal education system and ranges from individualized to nationwide literacy.

Computer technology is the use and study of computers, networks, computer languages and data base within the learning and teaching process. Computers have revolutionized the ways in which we store, share and access information, and the speed at which technological advances have made price/performance improvement in the field. Computer technology has had major effects and changes on the economy, health, education, industry, agriculture and other fields. The ability of computer in gathering, processing, presenting and sending large amount of information has major changes in the way large information as well as individuals organize their lives. So also in Adult and Non-formal education programmes, computer technology application has led to expanded opportunities to acquire the skills and mastery of tools to support independent and lifelong learning.

Computer technology has helped learners to reflect on every practice that information technology brings their way in terms of what obtains in and around the world on daily basis (Fredrick, Maurice & Ruth, 2015). It promotes lifelong learning for them since they are always able to keep abreast with changes in the area of education and health among others in the world economy that is taking place on daily basis. This in essence is helping the adult learners become key players in the affairs of the society because their knowledge, skills, abilities and other competences are enhanced. Okukpon, Omiunu & Omoruyi (2013) opined that their level of functionality in socio political, economic and other uses have become greatly influenced through the use of computer technology. Computer technology in teaching and learning programme is aimed at facilitating their development as better citizens in the country capable of utilizing the knowledge acquired to contribute their quota to the social, economic and political development of the country (Adimora, 1995).

There are different adult and non-formal education programmes where computer technology is used which include adult literacy, community development education, functional literacy, population education, health extension education, agricultural extension education. There are numerous software products for adults available on CD-ROM. For instance English New Reading Disc offers instruction for basic-level literacy for adults in a constructivist context in which they learn to read by writing letters, numbers, articles and responses to debates. Also adults that have issues with mathematics are been introduced to the Mathematics tutor educational software that helps the adults build confidence which is so vital for success in mathematics. This software introduced the adults to numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division of numbers. Computer technology is used to train adults to communicate with the outside world and getting in touch with news from outside. Adults are trained using animation on the computer for family planning, personal hygiene, HIV/AIDS, STIS, STDS and also the best treatment when they encounter any of this. Adults who are involved in farming are introduced to the current mechanisms used for farming, method of using them, preservation of crops, fermentation, packaging and marketing through computer technology.

However, computer technology is been used to record and ensure the actual number of participants in the programme. It is also applied in the process of reaching out to the participants of the programme during the teaching/learning process. For instance, the

computer can be connected to a projector to enlarge the view for the adult learners as well as to make it easier for learners to understand what they are being taught through visual presentation of ideas and concepts. Computer technology as an instructional material also makes abstract ideas concrete for learners which according to Ido (2003) increases their interest in the teaching and learning process

Adult learners consider the use of computer technology worthwhile especially in the areas of new ideas and research. Globalization has influenced adult learning and non formal education through computer technology application by encouraging the adult learners on distance learning, expanding educational services available to the adults, as well as introduction of new ideas in teaching and learning process. Computer technology application has the ability to expand the information available to people and expose them to new ideas which can transform their lives (Offorma, 2004). The application of computer technology is not only emphasized in corporative business and the industrial sector, but it is an essential part of education at all levels (Allen, 2011), which include adult and non-formal education programme. According to Omage (2012), adult and non-formal education programmes are being taught formally and non-formally at institutional and non-institutional levels. It is no longer limited to the homes through open apprenticeship trainings but cut across our schools, offices, work and business places, community organizations, religious settings, harems and so on. She further said that what keeps them in the programme however is their perception and that is what motivates them.

Learner's perception largely influences their decisions to be involved in programmes or learning activities. According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary 6th edition, perception is having the ability to see or understand things. Perception being a cognitive process is the value learners place on persons, objects and things around them. It involves reflection of values in the environment and is extricable linked with communication and interaction. Perception helps learners to identify, discriminate, recognize, judge objects, qualities and relation in our environment by means of sensory information. As relates to learning, perception has to do with one's disposition, values and beliefs about ones capability, about the learning environment which is socially and culturally induced (Ibeh, 2002). According to Okukpon, Omiunu and Omoruyi (2013), adult learners perceive computer technology as one that has greatly transformed the concepts and demands of reading, writing and the use of printed information for their daily activities and community chores. Computer technology is believed to be transforming learning management, delivery, students, administration, financial management, research activities as well as human resources. Also, perception varies from one person to another, time to time with mood and direction of focus of sense organs at the time (Omage 2012). The perception of adult learners in the process of teaching and learning have a long way to go in determining if the learner(s) will be fully involved in the process.

The world has become a global village through computer technology. Therefore, for adult learners to operate at the world level now, they must have a right perception towards computer technology in their various programmes. Programmes of adult and non-formal education are meant to bring about development of man's potentialities and ultimately the human self. Adult learners have lots of experiences they come to the learning environment with that have been built overtime through their perception. Adult learners know their immediate needs and as such, application of computer technology in adult and non-formal education programmes should be planned to meet the needs of the learners and they must be actively involved. By this, a right perception is built in them.

Computer technology therefore, encompasses the notion of the application of wide range of technologies to communications/information handling (which includes generation, storage, processing, retrieval, dissemination e.t.c). It also extends to its use in the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information. Its application has brought about tremendous improvement. Hence, computer technology especially in the teaching and learning programme is aimed at facilitating their development as better citizens in the country capable of utilizing the knowledge acquired to contribute their quota to the social, economic and political development of the country.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It has been discovered in recent years that application of computer technology in teaching and learning process have made learning more interesting. In the present information age, adult use of computer technology in learning is very important. This is so because the use of computer technology would enhance competence and confidence in participants. However, many adult are not exposed to the use of computer technology in learning while some adult have been making use of it. It is therefore necessary to obtain empirical evidence from adult learners themselves to determine how they feel about the application of computer technology in learning process. This is the task which this study seeks to accomplish. The problem which instigates this study therefore, is how the adult learners perceive the use of computer technology in adult and non-formal education programmes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the perception of adult learners towards the use of computer technology in adult and non-formal education programmes?
2. Is there any difference in the perception of male and female adult learners towards the use of computer technology?
3. How has the application of computer technology enhanced or influenced adult learners' educational attainment?
4. How do adult learners perceive the quality of computer technology application in teaching and learning?
5. What are the challenges of computer technology as perceived by adult learners?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Determine the adult learners perception towards the use of computer technology in adult and non-formal education programmes
2. Ascertain if there is any difference in the perception of male and female adult learners.
3. Find out how computer technology has influenced or enhanced educational attainment as perceived by adult learners.
4. Examine how adult learners perceive the quality of computer technology application in teaching and learning
5. Find out the challenges of computer technology as perceived by learners.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was employed because of its usefulness in fact finding and description of people's opinion in a natural setting. The population of this study was

made up of adult learners in learning centers in Akure where computer technology is used. The purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of three hundred and twenty (320) participants drawn from four adult and non-formal education training centers in Akure where computers are used to teach. The main instrument for the study was the modified Likert scale questionnaire. The instrument was validated by two lecturers in the Department of Adult and Non-formal Education, University of Benin. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test re-test method. A correlation index of 0.69 was obtained. This shows that the instrument was reliable. Descriptive statistics was used. These comprised frequency distribution, simple percentages and mean score analysis

RESULTS

Research Question I

What is the perception of adult learners towards the use of computer technology in adult and non-formal education programmes?

Table 1. Perception of adult learners towards the use of computer technology in adult and non-formal education programmes

S/N	Items	Weighted Mean	Mean Score	Remark
1	Adult learners see computer technology in adult and non-formal education programmes as a mere waste of time	601	1.88	Not Accepted
2	With computer technology adult learners can learn at any time: where, when and how	864	2.70	Accepted
3	Most adult learners have phobia for computer	623	1.95	Not Accepted

Analysis of data in Table 1 show that only item 2 met the mean score of 2.50 and so was accepted. Item 1 and 3 were rejected because they did not meet the mean score. This, therefore, means that the adult learners agree that with computer technology, they can learn whatever they want to learn at any time conveniently.

Research Question 2

Is there any difference in the perception of male and female adult learners towards the use of computer technology?

Table 2. Difference in the perception of male and female adult learners towards the use of computer technology

Level of Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	47	14.69
Agree	51	15.94
Strongly Disagree	196	61.25
Disagree	26	8.13
TOTAL	320	100

In the Table above, it can be seen that 47 or 14.69 of the sampled respondents indicated that they strongly agreed that there is a difference between the perception of male and female adult learners towards the use of computer technology while 51 or 14.17% indicated agreed. On the other hand, 61.25% and 8.13% strongly disagree and disagree respectively on the

issue. This therefore means that there is no difference in the perception of male and female adult learners towards the use of computer technology.

Research Question 3

How has the application of computer technology enhanced or influenced adult learners' educational attainment?

Table 3. Influence of computer technology on adult learners' educational attainment

S/N	Items	Weighted Mean	Mean Score	Remark
1	Computer technology has made adult learners more interested in learning	957	3.00	Accepted
2	Adult learners admire computer technology because it has further enhanced adults participation in affairs which has made them better citizen	874	2.73	Accepted
3	Adult learners find it easy to use computer technology to do their assignments	943	2.95	Accepted
4	Adult learners find it boring working on the computer	756	2.36	Not Accepted
5	Computer technology has improved the spellings of some learners through the computer spell check	854	2.68	Accepted

Table 4.3 shows that items 1, 2, 3 and 5 met the criterion mean and so were accepted. However, item 4 did not meet the criterion mean and so was not accepted. This means that computer technology have made adult learners more interested in learning, further enhanced adults participation in their communities, made them better citizen and also improved their spellings through the computer spell check.

Research Question 4

How do adult learners perceive the quality of computer technology application on teaching and learning?

Table 4. Perception of adult learners on the quality of computer technology application on teaching and learning

S/N	Items	Weighted Mean	Mean score	Remark
1	With computer technology adult learners are able to browse the internet for information	800	2.50	Accepted
2	Computer technology is a way of eradicating traditional method of learning	623	1.95	Not Accepted
3	Computer technology has helped to open up access to rich materials which enhanced teaching learning process	854	2.68	Accepted
4	Computer technology has helped adults to be more involved in the teaching and learning process.	858	2.68	Accepted
5	Computer technology has encouraged adult distant learning programmes	860	2.69	Accepted

Table 4 shows that items 1, 3, 4 and 5 met the criterion mean and were thus accepted. On the other hand item 2 did not meet the criterion mean and was therefore rejected. This simply means that with computer technology adult learners are able to browse the internet for

information, open up access to rich materials which enhanced adult learners' participation in the teaching learning process and also encouraged adult distance learning programmes.

Research Question 5

What are the challenges of computer technology as perceived by adult learners?

Table 5. Challenges of computer technology as perceived by adult learners

S/N	Items	Weighted Mean	Mean Score	Remark
1	Most of adult training centers do not have computers	873	2.73	Accepted
2	The computer available in most adult training centers are not enough for the learners	854	2.67	Accepted
3	Lack of adequate power supply is a major issue Faced by most adult learning centers with computer	956	2.99	Accepted
4	Facilitators of most adult training centers cannot operate a computer	754	2.36	Not Accepted

In Table 5 above show that items 1, 2, 3 met the criterion mean and so were accepted. However, item 4 did not meet the criterion mean and so was not accepted. This means that most of the adult training centers do not have computer, centers where there are computers, the computers available are not enough for learners and also power supply is a major issue faced by most adult learning centers. It therefore means that some of the challenges of computer technology as perceived by the adult learners include inadequate computers, irregular power supply and lack of computer skills

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings revealed the perception of adult learners that with computer technology, they can learn whatever they want to learn at any time at their own convenience. This finding is in support of the position of Nzube (2003), who reported that computer technology provides a wide opportunity for adults to acquire knowledge without limit. Similarly, Okukpon, Omiunu and Omoruyi (2013), opined that adult learners perceive computer technology as one that has greatly transformed the concepts and demands of reading, writing and the use of printed information for their daily activities and community chores. This therefore means that with computer technology the learners are not limited to any body of knowledge.

The findings further revealed that there is no difference in the perception of male and female adult learners on the use of computer technology. This finding negates that of Shashaani (2000) who found that males are more interested in working with computer than female counterparts and enjoy working with them more. And also Krendle, Broihier, & Fleetwood (2004) who observed that among adult learners in training centers, male were significantly more interested in computers. In addition, the finding showed that computer technology have made adult learners more interested in learning, enhanced adults participation in soulful affairs, made them better citizen and also improved their spellings through the computer spell check. In support of this finding, several evidences are bound on the benefits or influence of computer technology. Hopey (2003) reported that that adults who use computer technology can acquire greater knowledge and develops active learning skills, problem solving skills and critical thinking skills. Also, Adimora (1995) indicated that progress in the application of computer technology is rapidly changing the way we live, work, learn and would learn in the future. Similarly, according to Jake (2003), Computer Technology also enables students to achieve higher levels. Researchers have also found that computer assisted instruction (CAI)

enhances learning rate. Students learning rate is faster with CAI than with conventional instruction.

Furthermore on how adult learners perceive the quality of computer technology application in teaching and learning, it was seen that with computer technology adult learners are able to surf the internet for information; open up access to rich materials which enhance adult learners' participation in the teaching learning process and also encouraged adult distance learning programmes. The finding revealed that some of the challenges faced by adult learners include inadequate computers, irregular power supply and lack of computer skills. Albirini, (2006) observed that resistance to change from traditional pedagogical methods to more innovative, technology-based teaching and learning methods constituted challenge for adult learners. Also in relation to the finding, Iteboje & Okubote, (2002) reported that some of the challenges facing the use of computer technology include inadequate ICT infrastructure including Computer hardware and software and bandwidth/access, lack of qualified ICT personnel as well as irregular power supply which is very essential in the use of technological equipment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings it was concluded that though there may be challenges in giving up the traditional way of learning and having to adopt and adapt a new way of learning through the use of computer technology with the attendant problems of power supply and the availability of the computer hard wares. In spite of these challenges, adult learners believed that computer technology have a lot of benefits and positive influence on their learning process. This probably explains why they have a positive disposition and perception of computer technology.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made

1. The interest of the adults should be sustained by encouraging them and making computers available for use during learning process.
2. Facilitators should guide the adult learners on how to search for materials on-line independently.
3. Steps should be taken to ensure that computer system and other hardware's are adequate and also functioning properly.
4. Provision should be made for alternative power supply so as to prevent abrupt end of lessons due to power interruption.

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