

Literacy at a Distance in Multilingual Contexts: Issues and Challenges'

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Abstract

Literacy is perhaps the fundamental skill required for effective participation in education (formal and non-formal) for national development. At the same time, the choice of language for literacy is a complex issue in multilingual societies like Nigeria. This paper examines the issues involved, namely: language policy, language and teacher development as well as the role that distance education and ICTs can play in making literacy accessible in as many languages as possible. Two distance learning literacy projects are presented as case studies and the lessons learnt are discussed. The findings of this study suggest that although there is evidence of growing accessibility to ICTs like mobile phones, their use and success to increase access to literacy in users' languages, similar to the economic benefits that have been achieved, are yet to be maximised and attained. The implication of the lessons learnt should be relevant to other multilingual nations for the ultimate goal of creating access to learning for development.

Key words: Literacy, multilingual societies, ICTs, case studies, development

Introduction

The role of literacy in the development of a nation cannot be over-emphasised. Literacy skills are deemed essential in 'today's knowledge societies, conferring benefits on individuals, communities and nations' (UNESCO, 2006). As a basic human right and index for human development, literacy is at the core of UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) initiative. However, the EFA report for 2006, states that literacy was 'one of the most neglected of the six goals adopted in 2000 by 164 countries at the World Education Forum in Dakar (Senegal). Global trends in literacy show that 1) a greater majority of illiterate population is found in developing countries; 2) Although the population of literate young people has improved significantly, there is still 132 million youths worldwide that are unable to communicate in a written language; 3) there is a tendency for rural populations to have lower literacy levels than the urban populations; and 4) literacy rates are

highest in countries with the highest poverty rates. Also, about half of the world's population lives in nine highly populated developing countries called the E-9 (E for education and 9 for nine countries), and they account for 40% of school drop outs and 70% of the world's illiterate adults (EFA, 2006). The E-9 countries include Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, and Nigeria.

The presence of Nigeria among the E-9 underscores the challenge of literacy development amidst a large population and large number of languages. Language is central to achieving literacy, be it through formal or non-formal education. The ability to read and write in a language, whether it is national or indigenous, constitutes an integral part of defining a literate individual. UNESCO (2003, cited in Robinson, 2007) reiterated its position on the role of mother tongues in education and the implementation of language policies:

UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers.

UNESCO supports bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies (p. 60).

The multiplicity of languages should be an asset rather than a burden because of the potential they have for their speakers to access literacy directly in their mother tongue instead of through other languages. However, it is often the case in multilingual societies that many individuals do not have access to education because they are not literate in the choice of language of instruction. National language policies and the designation of languages for various purposes including medium of instruction for formal and non formal education „can facilitate or hinder language development and literacy acquisition’ (EFA, 2006). This study examines Nigeria's attempt to address the language issue through her language policy as a means of increasing accessibility to literacy of which the lessons learned should be worthwhile for other multilingual nations. The role of language in the use of distance education and ICTs to promote literacy are also examined through two case studies.

The Role of Language in Literacy

Although definitions of literacy have broadened over the years to include a wide range of skills, the basic skills of the ability to read and write remain at the core of any definition of literacy, while numeracy skills are viewed as supplementary. Also, these definitions do not specify language of literacy thereby leaving the decision to individual countries. UNESCO's (EFA, 2006) long-standing definition

of basic literacy does not specify the language of literacy:

A literate person is one who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life (p.153).

Neither is the language of literacy specified in UNESCO's definition of functional literacy:

A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his (or her) group and community and also for enabling him (or her) to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his (or her) own and the community's development (p.30).

In-deed, there is evidence to support expanded definitions that take into account continuous acquisition of new skills such as those brought about by the technological age. There is some evidence that points to a growing number of educated but functional illiterates who are unable to perform certain daily tasks that characterise the current information technology age such as, the ability to use the basic functions of a mobile phone (Ofulue, 2008). McCaffery et al (2007) offer a layered view of literacy comprising skills, tasks, practices, and critical reflection and emphasis could be on any layer depending on the purpose:

Literacy is rooted in the skills of reading and writing. These skills are used by individuals to accomplish tasks in their daily lives. These tasks are part of their literacy practices, socially and culturally rooted in the communities in which they live and work. Literacy can be a means for critical reflection on the world as a necessary part of becoming capable of creating change (p.41).

There are also country-based definitions of literacy which, in general, reflect its core concept that is, the ability to read and write, but also with some variations. These various definitions, which have implications for how literacy is measured, vary in their language considerations for example: the ability to write with understanding 1) in any language; 2) in a specified language; and 3) in at least one language. However, the critical question remains, in which language is attainment of literacy being measured and, by implication, in which language(s) is literacy learned or practised? Based on research which has shown that acquiring literacy in one's mother tongue enhances access to literacy in other languages, UNESCO (2003) -as consistently encouraged the use of the mother tongue in education. The reality, however, is that many children around the world begin their schooling using a second language (Ouane, 2003). And many others are excluded by virtue of non availability of literacy opportunities in their mother tongues. With greater attention being paid to the role of language in literacy, the issue of in which languages should literacy be learned becomes a very important consideration. The issue is even more critical for multilingual contexts like Nigeria. The linguistically diverse nature of Nigeria's language terrain has made this question a difficult and complex

one to answer over the years and even more so in the current dispensation where additional variables have been introduced.

Nigeria's Demographic, Language and Literacy Profile

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the ninth most populous country in the world with a linguistically diverse population of over 140 million people, about 510 spoken languages, and an adult literacy rate of 72% (UNICEF, 2008; Ethnologue, 2007). Population size is a key criterion for the classification of major versus minor languages. Approximately half of the population belong to the ethnic groups of the three „major“ languages: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, while another group that function as regional languages are spoken by about one tenth of the population, namely: Fulfulde, Nupe, Kanuri, Idoma, Tiv, Ibibio, Edo, Efik, and Ijo. „Minority“ languages, therefore account for the bulk of Nigeria's indigenous languages. Going by the literacy rates, which are based on literacy in the language of instruction, English does not command more than 69% of the population comprising second language speakers despite its official status, and its dominance of the sociolinguistic space in terms of attitudes, power, and social mobility. Adegbija (1994) aptly surmises the linguistically diverse nature of Nigeria's population when he notes that „although precise statistics are not available, one can safely conclude from the evidence available that no language in Nigeria is spoken by as many as 50% of the entire population as a first language“ (p. 16).

Based on Bamgbose's (1991) language topology, Nigeria shows the participation of at least five language types for literacy and communication and is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Language Typology

SN	Language Type	Function	Languages Involved
1	Mother tongue	Medium of informal education in the home and among peers within immediate community	All Nigerian Languages
2	Language of immediate community	Local or regional lingua franca	All Nigerian languages, minority languages in particular
3	Language of wider communication	Wider reach for education, and communication as lingua franca, national language. Also, official language which is second language for most and first language for a growing number	Official (English) National (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) and Regional (Fulfulde, Nupe, Kanuri, Idoma, Tiv, Ibibio, Edo, Efik, and Ijo)
4	Language of religion	Language of religious communication	Arabic
5	Language of wider communication	International communication	French

Source: Bamgbose (1991)

Research has shown that the most effective choice of language for basic literacy should be the language the child or adult is most familiar with (Adegbija, 2003). The language for conducting subsequent phases of literacy will depend on several factors including the learner's profile (age, language needs, attitudes and language skills already acquired), and the level/type of interaction with the immediate and wider society. These, as well as other factors such as the historical experience, sociolinguistic features, and nationalistic views, are considered in the choice of languages for education in Africa (Obanya, 2004, p.225). Nigeria's profile illustrates the complexities of language issues in multilingual nations as they seek for ways to achieve mass participation in literacy in learners' multiple languages.

Language Policy and Literacy

Language policies play a significant role in the spread of literacy. There is a strong link between language policies and the attitudes towards the choice and development of indigenous languages. As noted in the EFA report (2006):

Language policies and practices have played, and continue to play, an important role in literacy and the development of literate communities. National language policies - the designation of an official language, the choice of language of instruction in schools and adult learning programmes - can facilitate or hinder language development and literacy acquisition. Research consistently shows that learning to read and write in one's mother tongue enhances access to literacy in other languages. Yet literacy efforts in many countries lack a clear language policy (p.24).

Nigeria's language policy is embedded within its education policy with the ultimate goal of promoting literacy in the English language while also achieving a degree of proficiency in a select number of Nigerian languages. The National Policy on Education (2004) states:

Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and natural cohesion; and preserving cultures. Thus every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore, in the interest of national unity it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. For smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in primary and Junior Secondary Schools but a Non-Vocational Elective at the Senior Secondary School (p.5).

In principle, Nigeria's language policy on education prescribes a role for all Nigerian languages that are languages of the immediate environment, as languages of instruction for pre-primary and the first three of six years of primary education. English is prescribed as a medium of instruction from the fourth year of primary education on, and as a subject. A minimum of one national language is prescribed for learning as a subject at the secondary education level. French is a recent feature in the policy as a second official language, and is prescribed for learning as a subject. In other words, the learner should be literate in a minimum of three or four languages at the end of twelve years of formal schooling. The policy is silent on the language of instruction for mass literacy, adult and non-formal education. The assumption is that the language of instruction would be in the language of the immediate environment.

Language policies affect attitudes because prescriptions of which language should be used for what is a key factor that affects the attitudes of groups towards their mother tongues (Ouane, 2003). In countries like Nigeria where the policy assigns important roles to the exoglossic language, that is English, it is only natural that attitudes towards learning using the mother tongue will suffer. By virtue of its accorded status, there is a greater motivation towards acquiring English via formal education than towards Nigerian languages. Although the policy prescribes a function for Nigerian languages, cost of promoting learning in multiple languages is often cited as a major challenge to its implementation. The result is a migration towards languages of instruction within the immediate environment for which materials are available. Urban/rural population statistics for Nigeria show that a greater percentage (52%) of the population live in rural areas where the mother tongue is usually the first and sometimes only language spoken by pre-primary school learners. The language policy as practised, excludes a fair percentage of these learners to literacy because the language of instruction is not their mother tongue. In the urban setting, it is doubtful that the policy is being implemented as most schools use English as the preferred medium of instruction. Language policies should be designed to promote literacy in the mother tongue by assigning to them functionally significant roles or roles that are equally as important as those assigned to the languages of power to attract positive economic and social benefits to the speakers and thus have a positive impact on learners' attitudes towards their mother tongue. Based on the Indian experience, Rao (2007) observes that a clearly articulated framework for achieving literacy is a major factor to making effective implementation of sound policies possible.

Teacher Development

The EFA (2006, p.25) report notes the vital importance of teachers to the success of literacy programmes, yet the lack of adequate and regular remuneration, job

security, few training opportunities and continuous professional support have undermined their importance. The report states that, unless the professional development of literacy educators and their trainers is taken seriously, progress towards more literate societies will be severely constrained". Teaching within multilingual contexts is often beset by problems of language materials, curriculum, time allocation, and availability of teachers (Bamgbose, 1991; Obanya. 2004). Instructional delivery is still very much dependent on traditional text methods in the absence of other forms of resources. Traditional methods require large numbers of teachers, infrastructure, and language materials. Although these issues are not unique to language teaching, coping with multiple languages that require multiple numbers of teachers and materials becomes an issue. As is the case with high population countries burdened with high budget requirements for formal and informal education, the implementation of a language policy involving multiple languages for literacy becomes an additional burden. Although teacher development has improved over a period of time, the EFA progress report notes that in many developing countries including, Nigeria, there is still a shortfall in the number of trained teachers. To address the problem, focus on teacher development was adopted as one of the resolutions at the 7th Ministers' Review Conference of E-9 countries. However, the training of teachers in the language(s) for literacy should perhaps be given more emphasis than it currently receives, since acquisition of language skills is the basis for literacy and subsequent skills for development.

Multilingualism and Language Development

In addressing issues of multilingualism in adult literacy, Robinson (2007) states that literacy is about communication and is therefore fundamentally a language- activity; there can be no discussion of literacy without asking in which language literacy will be acquired and practised and this implies a clear knowledge of what languages specific groups of people use for communication in their daily lives (p.59).

There is a strong link between language and literacy especially in multilingual contexts, where the language for formal education is often dictated while that of informal education is usually negotiated depending on the language of the immediate or wider community and availability of teaching resources in that language. The number of languages recommended by the policy implies that a learner will be exposed to at least four languages apart from the mother tongue over a period of twelve years of schooling. Indeed, linguistic diversity appears to be a crucial factor in accessing learning in correlation with high population, poverty, and literacy rates. According to the EFA (2006) report on literacy:

...a majority of countries facing salient literacy challenges are linguistically diverse". Thus, it recommends that „decisions on language must balance political and ethnic sensitivity, pedagogical effectiveness, costs and learner preferences. The extra cost of

training teachers and developing materials in multiple languages must be weighed against the inefficiency of teaching in languages that learners do not understand. A multilingual policy should also ensure that learners have opportunities to gain literacy skills in a second/official language that may be of wider use (p.25).

At least six of the E-9 countries have relatively high number of languages of 200 and over. Table 2 illustrates this point by presenting comparative information on the linguistic diversity that exists in the E-9 countries, namely: literacy rates, population, and poverty:

Table 2: E-9 Countries' Statistics

	Country	Population	Number of Languages	Literacy Rates %	Population Living Below USD1.25/per day
1.	China	1,323,080,000	241	93	16
2.	India	1,130,340,000	427	66	42
3.	Indonesia	231,627,000	742	91	7.5
4.	Brazil	186,315,500	200	91	5
5.	Pakistan	162,652,500	77	55	23
6.	Bangladesh	158,665,000	46	54	36
7.	Nigeria	148,093,000	510	72	64
8.	Mexico	106,535,000	297	92	2.0
9.	Egypt	75,498,000	21	72	2.0

Sources: UNICEF (2008); Ethnologue (2007).

With about half of the population under 18 years, and 72% literacy rate, there are implications for both human and economic resources (UNICEF, 2008). Multilingualism is a key factor in countries like Nigeria because it constitutes an additional socio-economic burden, which in turn has a negative impact on literacy efforts as a result of learners who are denied access by virtue of non availability of literacy materials in their languages. The economic challenge of training teachers and developing materials in multiple languages must be weighed against the inefficiency of teaching in languages that learners do not understand (EFA, 2006). The benefits of using multiple languages include 1) removal of the language barrier and expansion of access to literacy; 2) learners are able to access literacy in their mother tongues without having to first learn another language based on the premise that literacy is most effectively acquired first in the mother tongue or in learners' first language, and 3) literacy in the mother tongue facilitates the acquisition of literacy in other languages.

Promoting Literacy Using Distance Education and ICTs

There is a general consensus that distance learning and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can provide opportunities for formal and non-formal literacy learning by adults, though access to technology is highly uneven in many places. It has also been noted that ICTs and distance learning have more immediate potential for offering professional development to literacy educators rather than for running literacy programmes (EFA, 2006, p.25). Another drawback is the fact that ICTs rely on international languages and therefore are not readily accessible to learners (Pennells, 2005). Access to literacy in multiple languages is remains the greatest challenge for multilingual societies. In addressing the issue of access, the E-9 countries recognised ICTs and distance education as important tools to improve teacher development. By implication, access to literacy should also be positively affected since teacher development is a key factor in promoting literacy. The need for distance education mediated by ICTs is borne by the factors of limited access to resource materials in multiple languages for learning ;the cost to development lack of trained teachers to facilitate the learning process with attendant costs, and lack of opportunities for learners (exposure to information and use) to develop their language skills. Because learning language is a skill-based venture, it requires ample opportunity (exposure and use) for the development of the skills. Distance education and ICTs make it possible to take learners' characteristics into consideration in the selection of the language for instructional delivery and thereby ensure that learning is conducted in learners' first language at minimal costs.

A national Information Technology (IT) policy was approved for Nigeria in 2001. The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), and the Nigerian National ICT for Development (ICT4D) Strategic Action Plan committee were established to drive the implementation of the policy. Encouraging the use of ICTs in education is one of the objectives of the policy. With such a policy in place, it should serve as a catalyst to making mass access to learning possible, through the use of appropriate technologies. While there have been experiments with these of print, radio and television in mass literacy projects, the possibilities of using newer ICTs are yet to be fully maximised for learning. The phenomenal growth in the use of mobile phones in Nigeria is an example of new ICTs with potential benefits for literacy efforts. From less than one million fixed and mobile lines in 2000 when the new telecommunications policy was enacted, to over 70,000,000 subscribers ten years later, and with a projected growth rate of 25% per annum, mobile telephony has the potential not only for closing the developmental gap, but also for providing access to learning for development in Nigeria. Teledensity which was at 0.33% in 2001 has risen to 56.32% by 2010 (NCC, 2010; Pyramid Research, 2010). There has also been appreciable growth in the spread and rural penetration of mobile telephony with 83% coverage of the population (World Bank, 2008). Mobile telephony has overtaken the use of the Internet which stands at 16% of the population, and television users at 25% of the population (World Bank, 2008;

Internet World Statistics, 2010). This wide margin is not unrelated to the fact that it costs five times more to access the Internet compared to the mobile phone.

Pennells (2006) is of the view that despite the significant growth of the telecommunications industry in Africa and mobile telephones as the „telecommunication medium of choice“ and their use in distance learning to send short text messages to learners and for communication between learners and their instructors, it is not likely to have a major impact on mass education due to affordability by many non-literate people and literacy programmes (p.34). Research, however, shows that literacy, not affordability is the major obstacle to the mobile phone being used to support mass education. In a comprehensive study on mobile telephony in Nigeria, Tiemo (2006) reports that this ICT tool has proven to be very successful and sustainable among the rural Nigerian population. However, low levels of education and illiteracy reinforced by poverty are among the factors limiting access to ICT infrastructure in developing countries and especially among women (2006, p.24). In a study conducted among rural women mobile phone users, it was discovered that language constituted a major barrier to their ability to operate their phones even though they were literate in their indigenous languages (Tiemo, 2006, p. 87). The study recommended that indigenous languages should be taken into consideration in the production of mobile phones, and education programmes for users should be conducted. With 52% of Nigeria’s population living in the rural area and illiteracy figures are higher among this group. With the recorded successes of mobile telephony among this group, this ICT tool has the potential to be used for promoting literacy. However, the indigenous languages will need to be given more prominent roles since they are often the first and perhaps only language of the learners. Elsewhere, in Bangladesh for example, mobile technologies with literacy-learning facilities for various non-literate groups are being utilised with improvement in 'literacy rates as well as in health, girls’ school enrolment, and use and conservation of water systems’ (CoL, 2005; Rezwan, 2004, cited in Pennells, 2006, p.21).

Case Studies of Literacy Projects at a Distance

Although print has remained the main medium for literacy because of its relatively more effective affordability and accessibility compared with electronic media, the use of ICTs offer better possibilities for creating access to learning. Pennells (2006, pp.21, 34) notes that Radio has shown „continuing potential for use in literacy development“ particularly for learner groups who are separated by distance. He reports that the use of distance learning as a support to literacy development has been very significant in the area of teacher-training, particularly in Africa using a blended approach of face to face and ICT mediated instruction. Two examples of literacy programmes using technologies are presented here.

Literacy-by-Radio Programme

A National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education was established in 1990 as part of Nigeria's response and commitment to attaining the EFA goals. It is instructive to note that the major problems in implementation as identified by the Commission are same as those affecting the delivery of formal education as well. They include funding, infrastructure, teaching personnel, and community ownership (Khalid, 2004 p. 28). These problems are also the reason the commission suffered a setback in carrying out her mandate until 2004 when government renewed its commitment with the view to achieving the EFA goals by 2015.

The literacy-by-radio project is one example of implementation of steps towards the attainment of Education for All (EFA) by 2015. The project was inaugurated in 2004 in collaboration with UNESCO. The present report comes from Niger State, one of the states selected to participate in the pilot project. It was conducted in two local government areas Agaie and Lapai, each with 5 communities. As part of their contribution and as means of owning the project, the local governments were asked to provide ten facilitators, translation and production of primers, and monitoring facilities. A total of 213 female and 6 male learners were selected for a two-week training. The learners were to meet at specified times of the day to listen to the broadcast. The broadcasts were conducted in the Hausa language. An examination was conducted at the end of the period. The report states that the learners developed more learning skills in a shorter period than through the conventional method of learning. Two issues worthy of note in the report are: 1. the local governments took ownership of the project, and 2. there were more women than men in the exercise. The project is an example of basic literacy and, therefore, a low-end literacy programme. However, because it is not self-sustaining, funding remains a major threat to long-term sustenance of the programme as well as increased participation.

Virtual Teacher Training Programme

The Virtual Institute for Higher Education Programme (VIHEAP) was launched in 2003-2004, under the auspices of the National Universities Commission. The programme was designed for higher education teachers. The objectives included -parading the knowledge of teachers while introducing teachers who have no formal training to teacher education. It was also designed as a pilot study to conduct training at a distance via the Internet. Over 400 teachers registered to participate in the programme. The programme can be classified in the further literacy skills phase because it is a high-end literacy programme, which assumes: computer literacy skills as a prerequisite for participation. However, the fact that the programme ended abruptly (was replaced by UNESCO's VIHEAF programme) raises questions about sustainability and long-term maintenance of the gains of

such a programme.

Lessons Learned

Distance learning using ICTs can extend the reach of literacy programmes in multiple languages. However, for such programmes to be successful, learning mediated by ICTs should be based on the learning profiles of the learners, and the attendant benefits to the learner both of which depend on the choice of language. Based on the Indian experience, Rao (2007) highlights the need to provide materials that are carefully prepared, carefully selected language medium, sequence of the lessons, themes covered and illustrations to meet the needs of the learners. Kanwar (2008) also notes that the 21st century young learner tends to take to the use of technologies faster and more easily than the adult learner. Adult learners tend to prefer to learn in regional or national language(s) because of the immediate benefits to them (EFA, 2006, p.204). Reporting on a case study of illiterate rural adult mobile phone users in Nigeria, Tiemo (2006) showed that they derive socioeconomic benefits which have made mobile phones a successful and sustainable tool for mass access even though they are not able to maximise the use of their phones due to language barriers. The main lessons learned from the two projects described are summarised as follows:

- Radio remains a basic, relevant, useful and effective ICT tool with the potential of reaching more people at a distance in the language of their choice.
- Ownership of the project through collaboration with local stakeholders is a key factor in the success of these projects.
- It is important that plans and logistics for the sustainability and long-term maintenance of literacy programmes are part of the framework because they constitute two major potential threats to positive cumulative outcomes of these literacy projects.
- More sophisticated ICTs like computers, Internet, and electronic training materials are very useful for continuing professional development purposes such as training of facilitators in the form described in the VIHEAP project for teachers.
- Contrary to some views cited earlier, there is great potential for the use of other ICTs like mobile phones for mass access to learning at a distance in multiple languages.

Conclusion

The of the paper was to examine the issues associated with promoting literacy for development amidst a linguistically diverse society like Nigeria, and the contributions of distance learning using ICTs to achieve this goal. As one of the key factors for sustainable development and for achieving the EFA goals and MDGs, it is necessary to develop cost effective and sustainable ways of creating mass access to literacy. Based on the premise that learning is best conducted in learners' first language, literacy should be provided in a language that is most access to learners, and that is most relevant for their needs. But because there are multiple first languages, with financial constraints affecting language development and teacher development, access to literacy in learners' first language remains a in Nigeria, and consequently a barrier to development.

The findings of this study suggest that although there is evidence of growing accessibility to ICTs like mobile phones, their use and success to increase access to literacy in users' languages, similar to the economic benefits that have been achieved, are yet to be maximised and attained. Opportunities for literacy should be encouraged using as many languages as possible, and distance learning makes it possible to turn the complexities of linguistic diversity into gains through the use of appropriate technologies that are accessible and meet the needs of the learners. In view of this positive trend in Nigeria, and given the linguistic and diversity of literacy needs, the adoption and adaptation of new technologies to learning among both young and adult learners need to be explored further.

Note

This is a revised version of a paper that was first presented at the 5th Biennial Pan can Commonwealth Forum (PCF5), held at the University College of London, United Kingdom 13-17 July 2008. The revised version had never been published elsewhere

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