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E-LEARNING PEDAGOGY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM: EMERGING ISSUES AND TRENDS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines e-learning pedagogy in the English language primary school classroom: Emerging issues and trends. It discusses the concept of e-learning and highlights the prepared-ness of public primary schools in implementing educational innovations. The paper further explores the discussion of the emerging issues and trends that are most relevant to the English language primary school classroom context. The major conclusions of the paper is that e-

INTRODUCTION

Africa now has more children in primary school than ever before, more girls going to school and more women who are literate (Isaacs and Hollow, 2012). E-learning is an extended form of classroom teaching where learning, either online or offline is facilitated by the use of computer, telecommunication devices, networks, and storage capacity. On top of its easy delivery of information and interactive nature, the main benefit behind using the e- Learning instead of the traditional way is that learners develop communication as well as personal skills such as autonomy, analytical perception, abstraction and others (Dargham, Saeed and Mcheik, 2013). Over the years, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has grown to become an important driver of e-learning and digitalization. Makinde, Makinde and Shorunke (2013) studied the influence of teachers' information needs on ICT use in schools in Oyo state, Nigeria and found that, computer, multimedia boards, projectors, telephones, internet, scanners, and photocopiers were used by teachers. Further from his findings the largest percentage of computer users (57.26%) reported to be monthly users, the largest percentage of multimedia users (52.56%) reported to be occasional users, and the largest percentage of projector users 125 (53.42%) reported to be occasional users. Earlier, Ajadi, Salawu and Adeoye (2018) observed that the most common type of e-learning adopted in Nigerian schools was in the

learning offers great promise as a powerful tool that can be integrated into curriculum and instruction to enhance education. Yet, a careful consideration of its promises and a thorough review of the literature suggest that persuasive usage on internet technology does not guarantee positive gains in instructional objectives, rather, the heart of learning lies in effective instructional strategies that manage diverse educational provisions to optimize student learning.

Keywords: E-learning, Pedagogy, English Language, Issues and Innovation.

form of lecture notes on CD-ROM which can be played whenever the learners desire.

Concept of E-learning

E-learning is a term that encompasses a broad array of content and instruction methods, and that has come to mean a new model of education involving revised curriculum, infrastructure, teacher professional development, textbooks, and exams to provide students with technology and "21st century skills" such as creative problem solving. A particularly useful aspect of ICT in education includes accessing the enormous amount of educational resources on the Internet and online libraries. The networking of teachers, students and others can also produce a lively community sharing information, ideas and strategies. (Olson, Codde, deMaagd, Tarkelson, Sinclair, Yook and Egidio, 2011). Vuorikari (2013) in trying to find a common meaning of the term e- learning went on to ask the following questions: Is e-learning an on-line coursework for students at a distance? Does it mean using a virtual learning environment to support the provision of campus-based education? Does it refer to an on-line tool to enrich, extend and enhance collaboration? Or is it a totally on-line learning or part of blended learning? (Vuorikari, 2013). Some of the definitions of the term e-learning as given by different researchers and institutions are reviewed below.

In some definitions e-learning encompasses more than just the offering of wholly on-line courses. For instance Olson etal. (2011) noted that e-learning has transformed from a fully-online course to using technology to deliver part or all of a course independent of permanent time and place. Also, Ajadi etal (2018) describes, e-learning as the use of new multimedia technologies and the internet to increase learning quality by easing access to facilities and services as well as distant exchanges and collaboration. The following are also different definitions of e-learning. E-learning refers to the use of information and communication technologies to enable the access to online learning/teaching resources. In its broadest sense, PEW (2013) defined e-learning to mean any learning that is enabled electronically. They however narrowed this definition down to mean learning that is empowered by the use of digital technologies. This definition is further narrowed by some researchers as any learning that is internet-enabled or web-based (Ajadi et al, 2018; Olson, 2011). According to VITTA and Keane (2015), the term 'e-learning' is applied in different perspectives, including distributed

learning, online-distance learning, as well as hybrid learning. E-learning, according to Makinde (2013) is defined as the use of Information and Communications Technologies in diverse processes of education to support and enhance learning in institutions of higher education, and includes the usage of Information and Communications Technology as a complement to traditional classrooms, online learning or mixing the two modes. Also according to Thorpe and Godwin (2016) the term e-learning refers to the attainment and use of knowledge that are predominantly facilitated and distributed by electronic means. To them, the e-learning depends on computers and networks, but it is likely, it will progress into systems comprising of a variety of channels such as wireless and satellite, and technologies such as cellular phones (Thorpe and Godwin, 2016). In their literature review on definitions for e-learning, Liu and Wang (2009) found that the features of e- learning process are chiefly centered on the internet; global sharing and learning resources; information broadcasts and knowledge flow by way of network courses, and lastly flexibility of learning as computer-generated environment for learning is created to overcome issues of distance and time (Makinde, 2013). Thorpe and Godwin (2016) argue that the concept of e-learning is proposed based on distance learning, thus a transmission of lectures to distant locations by way of video presentations. Makinde (2013) however claim that the progression of communications technologies, particularly the internet, did transform distance learning into e-learning. Ajadi etal (2018) defined e-learning based on the summaries of its characteristics. In the first place, they propose a multimedia environment. Secondly, they incorporate several kinds of information. Thirdly, e-learning systems support collaborative communication, whereby users have total control over their own situations of learning. In the fourth place, e-learning support networks for accessing information. And fifth, e-learning allows for the systems to be implemented freely on various kinds of computer operating systems. According to Tung and Deng, (2016.), this new environment for learning that is centered on electronic networks has allowed learners in universities to receive individualized support and also to have learning schedules that is more suitable to them as well as separate from other learners. This facilitates a high interaction and collaboration level between instructors or teachers and peers than traditional environment for learning. E-learning in academics which is characterized by the use of multimedia constructs made the process of learning more active, interesting and enjoyable (Jones & Peachey, 2015). The main constructs that have made e-learning the most promising educational technology according to Jones and Peachey (2015) include service, cost, quality, and speed. It is apparent that e-learning can empower students at higher educational levels to acquire their education in while at the same time perusing their personal objectives as well as maintaining their own careers, with no need to attend or be subjected to rigid schedule (VITTA & Keane, 2015). Vuorikari (2013) in support of this thought reported that the number of courses online has vividly increased as a result of the attained benefits for both learners and universities. Aiyebelehin, (2012) in his evaluation of the effectiveness of the e-learning experience in Saudi Arabia categorized the definitions of e-learning from three different perspectives: the distance learning perspective (Aiyebelehin, 2012), the technological

perspective (Okiki, 2011) and also from the perspective of e-learning as pedagogy (Isaacs & Hollow, 2012). It can therefore be concluded from the above that it is difficult to identify a common definition for e-learning. Some of the authors refer to e-learning as providing complete on-line courses only whereas comprise web-supplemented and web-dependent services for the provision of educational and support processes

Preparedness of Public Primary Schools in Implementing Educational Innovations

Preparedness of schools lies within the provision of quality learning resources and facilities (Trindade, Carmo & Bidarra, 2010). Educationists acknowledge the complexity involved in the implementation of innovations and endeavour in search of different ways to realize success. Implementation of innovations takes place in social-economic, physical and political settings. Therefore, many factors intervene at all stages. Curriculum implementation is a process that the project staff and education authorities always look forward to with a lot of eagerness. The first thing to consider relates to the attitudes of teachers towards implementing the programme. The attitude of teachers depends on their training capacity and how one is ready to receive the new programme. In addition, a lot of funds have to be spent on purchasing equipment and renovation of the existing physical facilities. Implementation also means the process of putting into practice a developed curriculum. Implementing a new system in curriculum is costly and more effort is required to be put into the process to ensure success is achieved. All stakeholders need to be prepared which involves training schedules and even public awareness through media, seminars and workshops (Trindade, Carmo & Bidarra, 2010). Given high poverty index in the country, public primary schools cannot be able to shoulder the cost of implementing an expensive programme such as e-learning. Implementation in curriculum could also be defined as a systematic process of ensuring that the new curriculum reaches its immediate beneficiaries, the learners. Planning of curriculum change is a very complicated process at every stage. For instance, financial and administrative policy cannot be divorced from it (Kilker, 2010). The task of curriculum implementation involves persuading the people to change their attitudes, policy makers, administrators and teachers, trainers of teachers, school supervisors, parents, lay public and learners. The ultimate purpose is to make the process possible. It can be done by informing the public through mass media and personal contact, seminars, public lectures, etc. The other task involves obtaining the necessary professional personnel to perform various roles in the process carefully locating them based on accepted criteria. The process includes training teachers through pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes, educating teacher trainers, educational administrators, inspectors and all those likely to take part in the process (Kilker, 2010).

Emerging Issues and Trends that are most Relevant to the English Language Primary School Classroom Context

E-learning, in spite of the advantages that it has when adopted in education, also has some disadvantages. Studies support that e-learning possesses some disadvantages which are discussed as follow:

Physical Isolation

E-learning does not require the body, only the mind interacting in cyberspace (Ouzts, 2013), yet as Reeves (2018) argues, knowledge does not exist outside the bodies and minds of human beings. Giving a historical overview of the family and work systems, Ouzts, (2013) noted that industrialization led to technology, which led to a dependence on a machine and eventually results in physical isolation. When a student gets on their computer, they may have a sense of entering a space; there are concrete images that may offer stepping stones within internet—space, but there is no sense of a physical connection—there is only a mask that lies on top of a set of computer instructions. Reeves (2018) placed the physical at the centre of reality. 'I am' because I have a body. Without a body I have no place from which to perceive the world.

Community Building Minimal

If learning is a social process involving interactivity and communication with others, the content and activities of students within the 'community building' should be evident. Consequently, facilitating learning communities in the classroom is the goal of most school leaders but how does this aim compare to students working individually on the computer? Kilker, (2010, p. 2) found that current e-learning and classroom teaching methods are limited with respect to personalised learning as they typically provide the same content to all students. This is due to what Reeves (2018) notes as a predominately 'instructivist' rather than constructivist pedagogical culture. Relatively little emphasis is put on the learner per se who is usually viewed as a passive recipient of instruction. Asynchronous e-learning using pre-packaged software is based on instructivist pedagogy generally treats learners as empty vessels to be filled with learning. Salomon (2010) argues that the results of ICT use in education have been disappointing because they are driven primarily by pedagogy of instructivism. According to this view, knowledge can be transmitted and the role of technology is to assist in this process (Salomon, 2010).

The Popularity and Decline of Computer Mediated Learning

The development of the computer for learning is regarded as one of the major achievements of the twentieth century. Shiny monitors promised perfection—the computer as a learning tool held the masses in awe as a progressive godsend for education. Tung and Deng (2016) argue that although teachers and students were initially enthusiastic about using computers as a learning tool in the classroom with its appeal of graphics and colourful animations, this enthusiasm has been on the steady decline. As the popularity of computers rapidly grew—endorsed by media and overly zealous educators, children were continually encouraged to use computers at school and at home. Beliefs proliferate among many parents and within a short time, educators were advocating with great enthusiasm that computers were highly important to the education of children and their later success depended upon using computers (Tung and Deng, 2016). This gained its

momentum in the 1990s but evidence supporting the continued popularity of computer mediated learning is limited. In a study by Graham and Banks (2010), it was found that over time primary children approached computer assisted learning neither overly excited—nor did they ignore it. If a teacher actively interacted with the children at the computer, the children's motivation to use it increased. As the authors note: "If a teacher were present, lines of children would form at the computer.. .but if the teacher were absent or another more open ended engaging activity was presented, one that involved the teacher, that is a more human interacting activity, not one child was interested in or used the computer". What this suggests is that, it is not the computer that increases a child's enthusiasm to actively participate in learning—rather it is the presence or absence of a human element—and in this example it was the teacher. Therefore, one could conclude that the popularity for computer assisted learning results only from the 'absent' teacher who has handed their pedagogy over to the software. In this environment, children are forced to 'go it alone'. This observation raises the question about children's real interest in computer assisted e-learning. Are children seemingly interested in computers because adults express a fascination with them, but if given the choice would rather connect with adults? This also supports the possibility that children's primary interest in the computer is to understand adult's fascination with the tool.

Sociability Redeveloped

Technologically generated communities reformulate the way students and teachers view three
concepts: social interaction, social bonding and empirical experience (Reeves, 2018). Mor e-over technologically generated communities are geared more to one gender. Hellsten's (2006) study in a primary school (English Language) in Sweden found that computers motivate only the small percentage of male teachers in primary schools but not female teachers who have substantially different perspectives of the role of technology as pedagogy.

Students with Interpersonal Intelligences are Disadvantaged

Web-based pedagogy privileges, the written word— students must be literate and competitive if they are to capitalize on the formal properties of e-learning technology (Cole, 2010). In this environment, lost is the opportunity to think aloud, to work through, constitute and articulate new ideas. Even if a teacher were to include the technology of a Wiki as a means of class dialogue and discussion, there are problems to consider. For example, Mosher (2018) argues that the purpose of a Wiki is for everyone to contribute their knowledge to be viewed and shared publicly by others. But if an individual student is not geared toward such openness, criticism or competition; let's face it, such a medium tends to encourage internal competition as participants are encouraged to criticize each other's ideas, then young children are not going to be open to sharing their personal

thoughts to an entire class or simply have other students critique their ideas or beliefs. Furthermore, as Cole (2010) highlights, teacher and student cannot 'walk and talk' because web based pedagogy enforces a Cartesian duality that splits mind and body. While learning and working on a computer, as Cole (2010) insists, we are literally disembodied. For Dewey (2016), learning digitally may well push Cartesian dualism to new heights as minds connect over vast distances without the inconveniences of time, place and body. The result of promoting the mind over the body is not only to dichotomize the two—but shifts the emphasis to 'learning by thinking'—thereby further entrenching antiquated notions of rationality as the sole source of knowledge (Cole, 2010). The assumption here is that all students have similar E-learning needs.

Minimal Teacher Expertise with Technology

It has been noted that the declining retention rate of teachers and their pattern of frequent transfers makes it difficult, if not impossible, to maintain the needed level of teacher expertise (www.rippleeffects.com). This was confirmed in a report by Eklund, Kay and Lynch (2013) titled, e-learning: emerging issues and trends, which showed that although it is clear that a successful implementation of e-learning depends on the competence of the practitioner, the declining retention of school teachers has resulted in a lack of knowledge, experience and skills necessary for e-learning to profit in most curriculum areas.

Knowledge

The impact that e-learning has on our epistemologies, creates new forms of interpersonal interaction that must modify our views of identity and community (Blake & Standish, 2000). One way to summarize this is to reflect on Eklund, Kay & Lynch (2013) who have suggested e-learning is well positioned within the 'political push' and technological 'pull' currently prevalent in most primary education institutions. The political push is encouraging educationalists to increasingly experiment with tools which promote e-learning which, in turn, is perceived to help in the development of more autonomous, responsible learners. Whilst such development is likely to have been customised for the educational context it remains a fact that e-learning can very often be viewed as being a neutral tool that can be used to achieve the same ends as non-electronic tools previously did. Jefferies and Stahl argue that this assumption is, however, patently false as there is a large body of literature that states that ICT is not a neutral but has inbuilt assumptions and ideologies that partly determine possible uses of the technology.

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that partly determine possible uses of the technology. E-learning implies that knowledge can be packaged and transmitted and the tools suggest that reality can be objectively defined, packaged and transmitted. The tools support a more traditional, objectivist approach to education. However, the use of such tools can also be seen to reinforce a particular relationship between technology and our view of humans (Dewey, 2016). For example, if we see humans, not to mention children, as information processing machines, then failure to process information in the desired way is a failure of the machine, which may require reprogramming or being exchanged. Mosher (2018) suggests this facilitates a sort of degrading technological determinism which emphasises processing increasing amount of information rather than developing knowledge, undermining academic integrity Engelbrecht & Harding (2011) note that knowledge becomes more or less important simply because technology requires it. Today's students have formed their habits of mind by interacting with information that is digital and networked. Schilling (2015) admits that 'although schools continue to push writing as the skill students must have to be articulate thinkers, they risk stagnation in an epistemological eddy if they do not also appreciate digital video production, database programming, or even the underlying functionality of MediaWiki, as necessary for developing the cognitive abilities to create and share knowledge'.

Children, Parents, Teachers and the Great Divide

Children outstrip their parents in their facility with this technology. Prensky (2011, p. 1) admits that there is indeed a broad ugly ditch that continue to divide young people, the digital natives, from their teachers and parents, *the* digital immigrants. As Prensky explains: "Kids born into any new culture learn the new language easily, and forcefully resist using the old" (2001, p. 4); the old being traditional face-to-face teaching. The result: teachers feel compelled to de-emphasize 'legacy' content such as reading, writing, and logical thinking in favour of using computer software. Children have their hands firmly grasped on the technological learning tools so it seems; consequently the knowledge and pedagogy of their parents and teachers, look both obsolete and out of touch (Mosher, 2018).

Unrealistic

E-learning is prepacked and tidily programmed. By nature, it organises individuals, influences their patterns of interactions, and their feelings, and organises their thought processes (Engelbrecht & Harding, 2011). In this sense, education becomes a product and it can be easily packaged and marketed as a product through internet technologies (Cole, 2010). Schilling (2015) argues that the distribution of digitized education as a learning tool - is often justified as an inevitable part of 'good programming' and resonate of the new 'knowledge-based' society. In practice, such automation is however, coercive in nature—being forced upon students, with commercial interests in mind. It is not a progressive trend at all, but a regressive trend, towards the rather old era of mass-production,

standardization and purely commercial interests. E-learning is in inextricable part of finance capitalism and performativity (Dewey, 2016). In other words, e-learning is a product focused not on education but on speed and efficiency of knowledge creation, transmission and distribution (Mosher, 2018, p.114). In such a milieu "the fate of individual learners will depend on factors which vary according to access to new technologies." (Lankshear, 2012, p 5).

Globalization

If e-learning is more the result of globalization than the technology itself (Besley & Peters, 2015); the medium is, in essence, simultaneous with the shifting economy and thus brings with it a certain unpredictability. In fact, a shifting economy attracts labour market advantages. For example, the general servicing and maintenance of computer hardware and software is often substantially better for schools located in the cities. Therefore, e-learning technology cannot be considered a stable and equitable method of investment for learning. Moreover, e-learning technology encourages cultural imperialism. For example, Nalder (2010) points out that although technology has promised to forge global communities, bringing cultures together, the reality is that technology replaces human action with customised software, and in doing so mirrors the aircraft flight paths which carry high volume 'traffic' between centres of paying customers and reinforcing the cultural divide.

A cultural mismatch, between the values and philosophy of Western technological advancement (particularly as e-learning pedagogy is typically exemplified in the English language classroom) and the values and philosophy held by many Aboriginal people and their communities for example, makes the issue of increasing participation in e-learning technology and computer assisted learning technology at school, a particularly thorny one. As Sims (2018) highlights, indeed e-learning is becoming mainstream, but only within the infrastructure of developed societies and models of technological learning environments retain their relevance only in a generation in which technology is the medium of learning for those who can afford it. Where these technologies are being used, the difficulty of accessing them and the digital divide between privileged and deprived groups continues to widen the educational gap (Sims, 2018, p. 2). In addition, as Besley and Peters (2015) confirms, if market forces continue to drive education via the technical and economic route rather than the pedagogical route, there is a danger that teaching staff may feel further levels of alienation. It would seem that teaching and learning strategies are merely embracing technology in order to satisfy a societal drive towards a postmodern environment that sustains 'Cathedrals of Consumption' (Lankshear, 2012, p. 8).

Credibility is a Continual Problem for the Web

At present there are no Web editors to police what brute facts are and what are not. Furthermore, as Bruce (2010) asks, 'Is the Web a bountiful source of information and

resources on every conceivable topic as some claim or is unreliable, ephemeral and over-commercialised as others warn?' (p. 107). A study by Baildon and Baildon (2018) showed that out of a sample of twenty one upper English language primary students only three were aware that on-line encyclopaedias could be a valid source of credible information—there was obvious confusion over what information and sites were credible and what information was not. As Coiro (2013) notes, with the proliferation of networked information, especially the Internet with its mass of information, varied text structures and changing formats, it is increasingly difficult, if not impossible for primary students to determine the trustworthiness of information gained through technology. The sheer amount of information, the commercialisation of web content, and the incredulous amount of semi-precious and junk-grade texts highlights the Web as having no real catalogue, no organization, no board of reviewers, no content policy, no authoritative authors and no canon of established works (Bruce, 2010). It contains every proposition and its negation - it is totally contradictory and incoherent. As it suffers none of the limits of time and space that define conventional collections, these attributes lead its users to both extravagant happiness and excessive depression (Bruce, 2010). Furthermore, assessment is a weak link in e-learning systems. Coiro (2013) argues that assessment is often a process of gathering data and returning results rather than revealing authentic performance which teachers could use for assessment of educational innovations such as e-learning pedagogy.

The relevance of spontaneity of learning, unrelated to the technological e-machine of conformity and regulation. This is problematic as spontaneity has been linked to high quality learning experiences (Williams, 2012). The content of information is minimized as students rapidly scan for bits of information rather than concentrating over longer periods of time on context, structure and critical evaluation, which for example, the study of a class text in a face to face teaching mode could arguably evoke more effectively (Kolb, 2010). In this context, Salomon (2010) notes, textbook learning is considered 'cool', in the sense they are associated with hard work and therefore unpleasant, whereas web based is 'hot' because they are simply more 'fun'. In this sense, web based learning accommodates for the child who is used to the disposable and temporary nature of a postmodern, consuming society, through toys, popular media, gaming systems, fast food and computers (Coiro, 2013).

There is no sense of place with online learning. Kolb (2010) highlights the need for online learning to develop a better sense of place and connection than it has to date. Kolb (2010) states that every web page or related link cannot be treated the same way as a Shakespeare or notable text. Consequently, online learning devalues traditional face to face teaching methods, and in the process deconstructs learning in the same way as SMS messages and graffiti (Donnelly, 2017). Such a deeper dwelling is discovered only if we stop building technological places. In other words online learning continues to define us, just as all things and places locate and define us. Rather than being our tools or products, online learning

simply reintroduces and reestablishes a 'one-size-fits-all' comprehensive method of learning.

Technological learning using computers privileges itself over traditional learning. As the internet opens up education far beyond the four walls of the classroom, and children understand this reality, the question must be asked concerning how traditional pedagogy can ever hope to participate equally in a generation in which technology is supposed to be the best medium of learning. Either it would be more logical to completely and fully hand learning over to technology or pay the price of children deciding that traditional learning is irrelevant and 'boring' - a necessary evil and e-learning technology as 'fun' and exciting. Donnelly (2017) calls this the 'feel good curriculum'. Stout attacks the basic tenets of the modern curriculum with a focus on entertaining school children, blasting it for lowering expectations, belittling competition, and turning schools into centres for therapy, not learning.

This handing over of education to the technocrats was given one of many warnings back in 1981 when the Director of the Office of Libraries and Learning Technology, U.S. Department of Education, predicated that "in the future all education will take place using computer-assisted-instruction, but that we will always have the school buildings for 'socialization' purposes.' This doesn't instill much confidence in the future of our education system. Moreover, as Prensky (2011) highlight, not only is traditional learning under threat from modern technological pedagogies but ironically it is e-learning itself that may soon be in the ranks of the unemployed. The latest learning tool; m-learning (mobile wireless internet learning), is the new low cost technology which is forecast to enhance learning and support the characteristics of the 'digital natives generation'.

Conclusions

E-learning offers great promise as a powerful tool that can be integrated into curriculum and instruction to enhance education. Yet, a careful consideration of its promises and a thorough review of the literature suggest that persuasive usage on Internet technology does not guarantee positive gains in instructional objectives, rather, the heart of learning lies in effective instructional strategies that manage diverse educational provisions to optimize student learning. This would suggest a move to a more constructivist rather than instructivist e-learning pedagogy. This is because knowledge is socially and individually constructed on the basis of experience. This suggests that e-learning technology spawns a homogenization and a dehumanisation of its customers (primary school students)—therefore, while technology in the form of e-learning offers many advantages, it also has many downsides.

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