

# Acceptability of online facilitation in National Open University of Nigeria

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## Abstract.

Lifelong learning is a form of adult education that is self-directed, self-paced and selfstudy learning which occur outside the formal school system. In this type of education, there is no limit to age, no significance to the notion of success and failure. Lifelong is both market-driven and demand driven, individual, government and organisations need it for various reasons. According to Wikipedia (2019) the free Encyclopedia, it does not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development, but also selfsustainability, as well as competitiveness and employability. It is a way of life and it is also continuous this is why some people refer to it as life wide. Lifelong learning will continue to be relevant as long as man lives and as long as development occurs, aspirations and desire will always necessitate its demand.

Lifelong learning as stated by Okediran & Sarumi (2001) was perceived as an alternative means to the failures and lapses of the traditional school system in the past but today necessities demand by development and complexities of the twenty-first century, increased longevity, global warming, information explosion and insecurity to mention a few account for the unending demand and relevance of the concept. All aspects of traditional African education are non-formal in nature, they take place outside the four walls of the classroom. Learners in lifelong learning ranges from out-of-school to individuals to people with degree qualifications who desire new placement in their jobs, higher-paying occupations, life fulfilment, inclusion in community programmes, interests in new areas completely (Javis, 2008).

Okenimkpe (2003) opined that adult learners by nature have self-concept, they have wealth of experience and have the motivation to continue learning in order to meet up with expectations and aspirations. He added that some of them might have been experiencing some symptoms of aging like decreasing speed of reaction, decreasing vision, decreasing hearing and emergence of some minor health issues which may be either as a result of a person's way of life or heredity. This may hinder their performances in some ways if not well controlled.

Online facilitation seems to be the way out for learners as it gives them the opportunity to showcase their ideas and experience during discussions. This mode of teaching is friendlier than the traditional mode that everybody is used to, the moderator is usually liberal, attentive, impartial, patient and affirmative. Australian National Framework (2003) described online

facilitation simply as the act of managing the learners and the learning through an online medium. The learners are given content in form of question or statement to brood over and discuss with the facilitator who ensures that the session is not rowdy or hijacked, he must always be in control.

Salmon (2005) offered a 5-Stage important model of Online Facilitation as mechanism to use when organizing and moderating successful online session. Meaningful learning that can enhance performance takes place with the 5-stage Model. The first stage which is at the lowest part of the ladder is 'setting up system'- when gadgets are fixed and the moderator can start the class by welcoming and encouraging participants. The next stage in ascending order is 'online socialisation' – familiarizing and providing bridges between cultural, social and learning environment. The next one is the stage of 'information exchange'- this means facilitating tasks and supporting the use of learning materials. The fourth stage is 'knowledge construction' – facilitating processing or conferencing. The last and final stage of the ladder is 'develop' – supporting, responding, at the same time providing links outside the chaired conferencing. Salmon also used shades of colour to indicate the amount of the roles of support system, participants and the moderator.

Online facilitation can be interesting and fruitful if well moderated, it can easily boost learners' performance because the rate of retention will be high especially with the opportunity to record and play back. It can also boost enrolment when benefactors spread the news of the fun they had, the knowledge gained and having good result to show for it.

**Keywords:** affordability, conferencing, connectivity, moderator, participants

## 1. Statement of the problem

The traditional mode of teaching and learning that was teacher centred was what everyone was used to. It became monotonous, not very interesting and demanding for people with lots of commitments and responsibilities. Then came the emerging technologies like assistive technology, web 2.0 and video conferencing which looks promising in terms of learners' interest and performance. Ghavifekekr, S. & Rosdy, W. A. W. (2015), Tella (2011) affirmed that the use of ICT can yield positive result to both facilitator and learner. It is advantageous and germane to every aspect of human endeavor in this century. Online facilitation was introduced not long ago in National Open University of Nigeria, it is not clear what learners feel about the new method of teaching. It is against this background that this study sought to find out how acceptable will the online facilitation in lifelong learning be to learner in terms of performance and enrolment.

## 2. Objective

The purpose of this study is to:

- Investigate learners interest in online facilitation
- Assess learners' affordability of needed materials online facilitation;
- Ascertain learners' accessibility to connectivity and power;

## 3. Research question

- i. Are learners interested in online facilitation?
- ii. Can learners' afford the needed materials for online facilitation?
- iii. How accessible is connectivity and power to students?

## 4. Methodology

Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. Survey design is most appropriate when seeking information about opinions, attitudes and behaviours of individuals in a population (Olaitan, Eyoh and Sowande, 2000). The target population were learners of 300 level student of 2018/2019 session from Uromi community Study Centre, National Open University of Nigeria which consisted of 350 learners. A sample of 170 was used for this study through stratified sampling technique. Online Facilitation Lifelong Learning (OFLL) structured Questionnaire was used to elicit information on the research questions for the study but the researcher was only able to retrieved back 169 copies. The reliability obtained through Cronbach Alpha yielded a coefficient of 0.799. Data collected was analysed with mean and standard deviation.

## 5. Result

### Research Question One

Are learners interested in online facilitation?

Tab 1: Mean Responses on learners' interest in online facilitation.

S/N	Items	Mean	Stand Dev.	Remark
1	The interaction in online class is encouraging	3.41	.598	Agree

2	There is always something to look forward to	3.33	.661	Agree
3	The forum task is always easy	3.13	.464	Agree
4	The class is always lively	3.05	.499	Agree
5	Learning at my comfort zone is what I enjoy most	3.46	.560	Agree

Average  $\bar{X} = 3.3$

The responses in table one revealed that learners are very much interested in online facilitation. They agreed to all items from class interaction, forum task to comfort zone enjoyment. The mean score of each of the items is above three and the average is 3.3. This means that the research question is accepted.

### Research Question two

Can learners' afford the needed materials for online facilitation?

Table 2: Mean Responses on learners' affordability of materials needed for online facilitation

S/N	Items	Mean	Stand Dev.	Remark
1	My income is above average	3.04	.542	Agree
2	Family and personal commitment is not a problem	1.82	.592	Disagree
3	My phone has the capacity for online activities	3.28	.675	Agree
4	I have access to good quality computer both at home and in the office	1.34	.654	Disagree
5	There is regular internet subscription anywhere I am at anytime	1.15	.437	Disagree

Average  $\bar{X} = 2.13$

Responses to research question two showed that people's income is relatively good with a mean of 3.04 but ironically seems not to be enough to care for their responsibilities that has a mean of 1.82. The result also revealed that most of them use good phones, phone capacity for online activities has a mean of 3.28. Mean response on access to good quality computers both at home and at work was 1.34 and that of regular internet subscription at all time was 1.15. Both suggested that they neither have good quality computers nor regular internet subscriptions. The mean average score for research question two is 2.13, so the research question is rejected because it is not up to 2.5

### Research Question three

How accessible is connectivity and power to students?

Table 3: Mean Responses on accessibility to internet connection and power.

S/N	Items	Mean	Stand Dev.	Remark
1	I have access to internet all the time	1.34	.613	Disagree
2	Network is good in my area	2.06	.534	Disagree
3	My service provider charge reasonably	1.53	.653	Disagree
4	There is regular power supply in my area	2.19	.654	Disagree
5	I have alternative means of generating power in case of outage	3.20	.559	Agree

Average  $\bar{X} = 2.06$

Responses to research question three revealed that there is no access to internet, poor network, unreasonable service charge and irregular power supply. Only item five is positive with a mean of 3.20 which showed that most of them have alternate means of generating power whenever there is outage. The average mean score is 2.06, so the research question is rejected.

## 6. Discussion

Learners' have great interest in online facilitation as shown in the first research question, they are interested because of the fun attached to make it lively and sociable. Guhlin (2009) corroborated this when he said that online facilitation is social and that online learning engages students that way. Learners often look forward to joining the class but for the affordability issue of the needed materials raised in the second research question which hinders most learners from participating. The result from the second research question revealed that affordability has a lot to do with online facilitation in lifelong learning and that most of the learners cannot afford the materials. Fain (2019) affirmed that online learning has failed to reduce cost, he explained that online learning has falling short of expectation in proving to be less expensive to traditional mode. Trucano (2015) believed that technology initiative in some part of the world is faith-based initiative, the citizens of such places are just trusting and believing it will happen while the people at the helms of affair only play lip services to propagandas. The internet society (2017) corroborated this by saying that "In 2012, it was estimated that less than 5% of schools in some African countries had even basic Internet access'. The response of the research question three also showed that online facilitation depend largely on connectivity and power contrary to the hypothesis stated that connectivity and power is poor. This is in line with Queiros, D. R & Vilier M. R. (2016) assertion that there is inadequate expertise in online tools and lack of access or connectivity in higher education.

The result revealed that the learners in National Open University of Nigeria are interested in online learning, they accept it whole hertedly but most of them are limited by finances, connectivity and irregular power supply which is peculiar to the country. It is hoped that if stakeholders are able to solve some of these problems online learning will be possible for all.



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