INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY SKILLS NEED OF HOUSEHOLD HEADS IN EZIRA COMMUNITY, ORUMBA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

Alexander Chukwudi Onyeme, PhD
Department of Curriculum and Educational Technology
Federal College of Education (Technical), Umunze
Anambra State
E-mail: onyemerusiugwu@gmail.com
07037034611

Abstract

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills have become an important component of community development. While generic skills are inevitable for everybody irrespective of age and location, ICT skills are much needed to empower the household heads in the rural communities for greater participation in community development. The study therefore was carried out to investigate ICT skills need of household heads in Ezira Community, Orumba South Local Government Area, Anambra State. Employing survey design, the study involved a population of 3203 household heads from which a sample of 355 were selected using multistage sampling techniques. An instrument titled ICT Skills of Household Heads Survey (ISOHHS) was constructed by researchers and validated by peers for data collection. The reliability coefficient of 0.85 was estimated for the instrument. Data collected were analysed with percentage. The findings showed some remarkable minimal ICT skills that apply to household heads. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others, that household heads should avail themselves opportunities for training in ICT skills, while communities should establish ICT training centres for household heads.

Key Words: Information and Communication Technology, Skills, Household Heads, Ezira

Introduction

The permeation of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into every area of human endeavour has left individuals with little or no choice in the adoption of the ICT for personal empowerment and community development. According to Oghogho and Ezomo (2012), ICT is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, mobile and fixed phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, (as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as videoconferencing, etc.) necessary for the delivery of information in the form of audio, data, video, image, etc. from Point A to Point B. ICT consists of all technical means used to handle information and aid communication.

The status of ICT in the scheme of things is such that it has become a matter of 'adopt' or be left by the way side (Okoli, 2019). Even people who were educated in the former tradition have since realised that skills in ICT is an important component in the new definition of literacy. A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group or community (Eleberi, Mbadiwe-Woko & Owede, 2014). In an era when every activity is laden with the ICT, skills in ICT becomes imperative. An ICT literate person will be able to employ computer and information technology to access, retrieve, store, manage and communicate information (Oguche, 2017). Today, people avail themselves of the services of the Automated Teller Machine (ATM) to make transactions instead of walking into the banking hall; they may in the alternative, stop by the road side to cash from the Point of Sale (PoS); public and private institutions and businesses no longer use ordinary keys to open doors as electronic cards are fast replacing the traditional keys. The list of ICT routines is endless. Thus, there is one clear message: no matter what and where, you cannot avoid the ICT!

It is a paradox however, that in the midst of the growing ICT phenomenon, a significant proportion of the people is not ICT-compliant. They rather rely on the services of third parties to access ICT services like the SMS, PoS, ATM, e-mail and so on with the associated risks and adverse consequences. In fact, many have been short-changed in the process of relying on other persons in accessing certain vital information and services, while personal information also have been compromised. In search of answers, some studies have thrown light into patterns of ICT literacy among groups. Nakhaie (1998) noted that male individuals

tend to have more positive attitudes toward computers regardless of their level of familiarity while the female attitude becomes more positive as their level of familiarity with computers increases. Furthermore, Linden and Adams (2009) observed that age differences regarding ICT use and skills may influence ICT literacy level and that young people are more likely to be ICT users and more ICT literate than older age groups because older individuals are slower to respond to rapid change in technology and increased reliance on computers than younger individuals. The above observation may be attributed to youthful exorbitance and passion for new discovery associated with the young people. The older people may feel they already have enough to contend with, and have little or no time to follow trends in technology.

ICT literacy however, is inevitable to everybody irrespective of age or location. In the rural areas where economic activities are mainly agrarian, household heads need ICT skills to enable them read weather forecast, learn new trends in agriculture and improve their yields. Because household heads take decisions for the family, they need ICT skills in order to access, store, retrieve, and transmit information in a timely, effective and efficient manner for their family wellbeing as well as community development. ICT skills therefore, are needed in businesses across rural/urban divide. It has been observed however, that researchers tend to study ICT skills need of players in the educational environment. Literature has ample studies on ICT skills need of tertiary education staff, secondary school teachers and so on (Okoli, 2019). The ICT skills need of rural communities appear left out as though these skills are not relevant to the rural populace. Thus, nothing has been done to study the ICT skills need of rural household heads who operate at the grassroots and hold the key to community development.

ICT skills are numerous, and skills' need can vary by occupation, status and age. For instance, Oguche (2017) identified 24 ICT skills need for the library staff in the universities which ranged from simple tasks of sending and receiving messages to more complex tasks of using advanced searching techniques and applying software packages. These skills need are not likely to be the same with the skills need of household heads in the rural communities such as Ezira, an autonomous community located at the heart of Orumba South. Ezira's neighbours include Umunze, Eziagu, Isulo, Akpu, Ogboji, and Umuomaku. Ezira is made up of three main villages, each with some sub-villages. The major villages are Obuotu, Ubaha and Imuohia/Awkii. Ezira, unlike most communities in the culture area known as Enugwu uno clan, claims autochthonous; there is no authentic and verifiable history about her origin or pattern of migration to its present location (Onyeme, 2021). Either this was lost naturally in the transit of time, or the history of the community was suppressed by a generation that wished to sustain the claim to autochthony. The archaeological findings at Ezira that were radiocarbon dated 9th Century tend to support this claim (). The fact, however, that Ezira is a very important community in Igboland has long been acknowledged. Writing on the significance of Ezira, Basden (1921, 1983) noted that:

> After second burial the departed spirit finds a home at Ezira. This is a town lying some twenty-five to thirty miles south of Awka, and it is considered the gate of heaven by the people of all the surrounding country. If anyone wishes to know the opinion of a deceased relative upon any matter, he may be put into communication with the spirit of the departed (p. 125).

The 2006 Population Census placed the population of Ezira at 15, 436 (Orumba South LEEDS, 2006). Household heads in Ezira are mainly farmers and may need basic ICT skills that will enable them make effective use of their hand phone beyond sending and receiving

calls; they need to operate the personal computer and use the internet services. It is therefore, the interest of researchers to survey ICT skills need of household heads in this important ancient community described as *The Gate of Heaven*.

Statement of the Problem

Skills for the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) are inevitable for everybody irrespective of class, age or location. Lack of ICT skills can disempower individuals and groups from taking important decisions affecting their lives. Yet, earlier studies on ICT skills need tend to focus on the academic world at the expense of people in the locale who need these skills to improve the welfare of the family and contribute meaningfully to community development. If the lot of the rural households must be improved, there is the need to empower household heads with ICT skills. Since the ICT skills could be broad and complex, there is the need to determine specific skills need of rural household heads. It is determining the ICT skills needs of household heads in Ezira community that constitutes the problem of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate ICT skills need of rural household heads in Ezira Community. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the minimal ICT skills expected of household heads;
2. Identify gaps in the ICT skills of household heads;
3. Determine measures to bridge the ICT skills gap among household heads.

Research Question

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What are the minimal ICT skills expected of household heads?
2. Are there gaps in the ICT skills of household heads?
3. How can the ICT skills gap among household heads be bridged?

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The design was employed to investigate the ICT skills need of rural household heads in Ezira Community. The population of the study was approximately 3203 household heads in Ezira Community (source: village registers). Sample size of 355 was selected using Taro Yamane formula. Participants were selected in the following order: heads of households numbering 138, 121 and 96, were selected from Obuotu, Ubaha and Imuohia/Awkii villages respectively based on proportion. In each village, participants were selected in each composing kindred units for spread. A 38-item questionnaire titled, ICT Skills of Household Heads Survey (ISOHHS) with structured and unstructured mix was developed by researchers after review of relevant literature and some months of informal observation of the target population. After determining the validity of ISOHHS, its reliability also was estimated. The ISOHHS yielded a reliability coefficient index of .85 using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) on data generated from 20 household heads in Umunze, Anambra State. ISOHHS was administered on respondents by researchers using the technique of hand delivery which is easier and more effective in terms of collection. After collation, a total of 321 validly collected copies of questionnaire was

analyzed. This number represents 90.42 per cent of copies distributed. Simple percentage was employed in data analysis.

Results

Research Question One: What are the minimal ICT skills expected of household heads?

Table 1: Minimal ICT Skills Need of Household Heads

SN	Minimal ICT Skills	YES%	NO%	REMARK
1	Opening SMS on the phone	301(93.77)	20(6.23)	Needed
2	Typing and sending SMS on the phone	302(94.08)	19(5.92)	Needed
3	Searching for names on contact list	311(96.88)	10(3.12)	Needed
4	Identifying the meaning of popular icons like send, setting, phone, message, etc.	288(89.72)	33(10.28)	Needed
5	Identification of different Apps on the phone.	267(83.18)	54(16.82)	Needed
6	Checking mail received in the e-mail box	311(96.88)	10(3.12)	Needed
7	Typing and sending messages through the e-mail	317(98.75)	4(1.25)	Needed
8	Attaching documents to the mail	312(97.20)	9(2.80)	Needed
9	Turning a computer on and off	320(99.69)	1(0.31)	Needed
10	Opening a computer file	313(97.51)	8(2.49)	Needed
11	Backing-up a computer file	256(79.75)	65(20.25)	Needed
12	Copying a file from one disk to another	267(83.18)	54(16.82)	Needed
13	Ms Word application	300(93.46)	21(6.54)	Needed
14	Searching information on the world wide web	321(100.0)	0(0.0)	Needed
15	Downloading files from the internet	311(96.88)	10(3.12)	Needed
16	Using search engine e.g. Google	299(93.15)	22(6.85)	Needed

From the Table 1, most household heads consider all the minimal ICT skills needed. Considering the frequency of responses, the following ICT skills are mostly needed by

household heads in the community: searching information in the World Wide Web (100%); turning computer off and on (99.69%); typing and sending messages through the e-mail (98.75%); Opening a computer file (97.51%); and attaching documents to the mail (97.20%).

Research Question Two: Are there gaps in the ICT skills of household heads?

Table 2: Gaps in ICT Skills of Household Heads

SN	Indicate whether you can perform the following tasks:	YES%	NO%	REMARK
17	Opening SMS on the phone	153(47.04)	170(52.96)	Gap
18	Typing and sending SMS on the phone	212(66.04)	109(33.96)	No gap
19	Searching for names on contact list	298(92.83)	23(7.17)	No gap
20	Identifying the meaning of popular icons like Send, Setting, Phone, Message, etc.	254(79.13)	67(20.87)	No gap
21	Identification of different Apps on the phone.	102(31.78)	219(68.22)	Gap
22	Checking mail received on the e-mail box	76(23.68)	245(76.32)	Gap
23	Typing and sending messages through the e-mail	67(20.87)	254(79.13)	Gap
24	Attaching documents to the mail	44(13.71)	277(86.29)	Gap
25	Turning a computer on and off	276(85.98)	45(14.02)	No gap
26	Opening a computer file	266(82.87)	55(17.13)	No gap
27	Backing-up a computer file	78(24.30)	243(75.70)	Gap
28	Copying a file from one disk to another	88(27.41)	233(72.59)	Gap
29	Ms Word Application	243(75.70)	78(24.30)	No gap
30	Searching information on the world wide web	66(20.56)	255(79.44)	Gap
31	Downloading files from the internet	57(17.76)	264(82.24)	Gap
32	Using search engine e.g. Google	60(18.69)	261(81.31)	Gap
	Average %	**146(45.48)**	**175(54.52)**	**Gap**

Data in Table 2 indicates that from the 16 listed minimal ICT skills, there are skills gap in 11 of them. These gaps manifest mainly in attaching documents to mail (13.71%); downloading files from the internet (17.76%); and using search engines (18.68%).

Research Question Three: How can the ICT skills gap among household heads be bridged?

Table 3: Means of Bridging ICT Gaps of Household Heads

SN	Bridging the Gaps	%YES	%NO	REMARK
35	Household heads should avail themselves opportunities for training.	299(93.15)	22(6.85)	Needed
36	Communities should establish ICT training centres for household heads.	300(93.46)	21(6.54)	Needed
37	Government should provide ICT infrastructure to communities.	316(98.44)	5(1.56)	Needed
38	Adult education centres should carry out extension services to accommodate the rural household heads.	288(89.72)	33(10.28)	Needed

Data in Table 3 shows the frequency of responses on means to bridge the ICT skills gap of household heads. All the means presented attracted favourable responses from most respondents. These include availing the opportunity of training, establishing training centres in the locale, provision of infrastructure by government and extension services by adult education centres.

Discussion of Findings

The minimal ICT skills need of household heads in Ezira community cut across skills needed for effective use of hand phone, personal computer and internet services. These basic ICT skills will enable household heads employ same in areas where they are needed. The skills for operation of hand phones include opening SMS on the phone, typing and sending SMS on the phone, searching for names on contact list, identifying the meaning of popular icons like send, setting, phone, message, and identification of different Apps on the phone. For internet services, they are expected to be able to check mail received in the e-mail box, type and send messages through the e-mail, attach documents to the mail, search information on the world wide web, download files from the internet and use search engine e.g. Google.

Some basic computer skills also needed include turning a computer on and off, opening a computer file, backing-up a computer file, copying a file from one disk to another, and Ms Word application. Although ICT skills need vary according to people's occupation, age and location, there are some common skills which are expected of users irrespective of age, location or occupation. This agreed with Oguche (2017) who identified 24 skills needed for library staff in the universities, some of which are common among household heads in the rural communities like Ezira.

The study found that most household heads in Ezira community possess some of the requisite ICT skills. Areas of gap however, include opening SMS on phone, identification of different Apps on the phone, checking mail received on the e-mail box, typing and sending messages through the e-mail and attaching documents to the mail. Others are backing-up a computer file, copying a file from one disk to another, searching information on the world wide web,

downloading files from the internet and using search engine e.g. Google. The areas where gaps could be found therefore far exceed the other skill areas where most household heads have not been found lacking. The gaps observed in the ICT skills need of household heads who are adults and many elderly agree with Linden and Adams (2009) that age differences regarding ICT use and skills may influence ICT literacy level and young people are more likely to be ICT users and more ICT literate than older age groups because older individuals are slower to respond to rapid change in technology and increased reliance on computers than younger individuals.

Finally, in order to remedy the situation, there is consensus among household heads to avail themselves opportunities for training; for the establishment ICT training centres for household heads in the communities. Also, government should provide ICT infrastructure to communities; while adult education centres should carry out extension services to accommodate the rural household heads. It is the expectation that with these interventions, household heads in Ezira community will be able to improve their capacity for community development.

Conclusion

ICT skills are needed in the recent time as a component of literacy. Individuals, especially household heads in the rural areas need these skills to participate effectively in community development. The minimal ICT skills need of household heads in Ezira community include those required for relatively effective use of the hand sets, computer and the internet. To that end, household heads need to avail themselves the opportunity of training in the application of ICT for their improved participation in the information age.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Household heads should avail themselves opportunities for training in ICT skills. These training can be obtained both formally and informally;
2. Communities should establish ICT training centres for household heads. This will accelerate development as information on community programmes can be passed across through the various ICT channels like the SMS, e-mail and other social media;
3. Government should provide ICT infrastructure to communities. ICT centres can be funded through the relevant agencies of government as part of the adult education programme;
4. Adult education centres should carry out extension services to accommodate the rural household heads. This can be done through town hall meetings, radio and television programmes, and so on.

References

Basden, G. T. (1921, 1983). *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*. Onitsha: University Publishing Company.

Eleberi, G., Mbadiwe-Woko, E. F. & Owede, K. E. (2014). Adult education and community development programmes as vital tool for transformation of rural communities in Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice, 5*(24), 7-12. Retrieved from www.iiste.org

Linden, R. and Adams, S. (2009). Technological change: its effects on the training and performance of older employees, in Gomez-Mejia, L. and Lawless, M. (Eds.), *Advances in Global High-Technology Management.* Greenwich: JAI Press.

Nakhaie, M. (1998). Social origins, social statuses and home computer access and use. *Canadian Journal of Sociology, 23*, 427-450.

Oghogho, I. & Ezomo P. I. (2012). ICT for national development in Nigeria: creating an enabling environment. *International Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences, 3*(2), 59-66. Retrieved from www.eaas-journal.org

Oguche, D. (2017). Assessment of staff ICT literacy competence in Nigerian federal university libraries. *Journal of Information and Knowledge Management, 8*(2), 77- 89.

Okoli, A. C. (2019). *Relationships between technology acceptance model, uses and gratification theory and teachers' adoption of ICT for instructional delivery in secondary schools in south east zone, Nigeria*. (Unpublished PhD Dissertation), College of Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria.

Onyeme, A. C. (2021). *Ezira: History and culture.* Unpublished collection of material for development project of Ezira history.

Orumba South. (2006). *Local Economic empowerment and development strategy (LEEDS)*, Orumba South Local Government Council, Umunze.