Nigeria Learning Passport Initiative: Advancing Digital Literacy in Basic Education

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Abstract
Nigeria Learning Passport (NLP), is a recent initiative aimed at strengthening basic educational provision in the country. This learning initiative would complement the face-to-face conventional teaching mode. The implemented initiative has the characteristic of being used either online or offline platform with mobile technology that enables continuous access to different learning contents in different subjects matter for basic education levels and learners can engage in the learning process either in school, at home, rural or in an urban setting. This inclusive approach ensures that no child is left behind due to geographical or technological constraints. Based on this background, the paper x-rayed the concept of Nigeria's learning passport and its brief historical trend; and discusses basic Educational Components and NLP in the Basic Education System. Similarly, the paper highlighted educational advantages around the use of NLP for providing inclusive basic education which include: The initiative provides and awakens government responsibility (Ministry of Education) to re-enact e-learning platform, with detailed core-curriculum contents across basic education subjects, which was arranged in a logical order; Reveal students searching skills and competency on core-curriculum contents of studies, that is Science, Arts and or Commercial since most of them are digital natives; Provides opportunity for students to engage on extra-lesson, on subjects or topic found challenging and Have the advantage to provides support system to both learners in school or outside the school system. Some of the identified challenges are: non-availability and access to devices (Mobile phones, Laptops) by some learners and Issues around the use of Ziro bite data and or education data plan to be available and free for users' connectivity in school. Lastly, recommendations were made and these include: The government should ensure the provision of customized devices (Mobile phones, Laptops) to learners and Ziro bite data and or education data plan to be made available and accessible for users' connectivity in schools.

Keywords*: NLP, Learners, Digital Literacy, Basic Education, Passport

Introduction
The experience of the Coronavirus lockdown across the globe, which apparently put a total stoppage to teaching and learning activities at all levels of schooling, the menace kept around 1.7 billion children around the world home from school. With this development, some countries quickly shifted to remote learning processes using virtual tutoring and other digital modes of learning thereby offering the opportunity for continuous learning in these countries while many economically and technologically challenged countries had limited options for students' learning. It was stressed that the absence of this opportunity (remote-learning capability) by many countries would undoubtedly exacerbate existing opportunity and achievement gaps of learning in basic educational provisions for a country like Nigeria. The idea behind learning passport was originally conceived by Glovinsky, (2021) UNICEF's global program manager, who stepped up with a pilot project into a new territory originally referred to as a digital educational platform to help displaced and refugee children and it is called Learning Passport in partnership with Microsoft, the University of Cambridge and of course with Dubai Cares. He believed that the platform could be adapted to meet new, pandemic-fueled demands of students in underprivileged areas. (De Brouwer et al., 2020: FutureLeaarn, 2020; Hawkins, 2022; UNICEF, 2021)

The learning passport platform has the capability to track different types of curriculum subjects that each student learns and guides them through additional materials, with little to no parental support. The initiative is an innovative global platform that provides localized curriculum for students around the world and it is seen as a new solution designed to close the learning poverty gap, Originally, this platform could be used online or off-line with Mobile technological devices, enabling high quality and flexibility in learning. Developed countries that have this learning alternative quickly make a switch-shift and students continue learning at all stages but on the contrary in countries not equipped with this advantage their educational systems suffer throughout it and continue to grapple with challenges stemming from the pandemic period. Before the crisis, the world had an estimated 35 million children already displaced globally as a result of war, natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and other related crises. Research revealed that, in many countries, efforts to mitigate pandemic risk have separated 463 million students from school entirely due to a lack of an alternative to learning policies or a lack of devices needed at home (De Brouwer et al., 2020; FutureLeaarn, 2020; Hawkins, 2022)

Statement of the Problem
Nigerian Educational System was equally badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in school closure at all levels this single act grounded the teaching and learning process across all educational provisions, thereafter, the post-covid, educationists, began to advocate for the need for a more dependable and realistic swift-switch platform that would aloud for the utilization of technologies to bring about learning in our educational provision, especially in Basic-Education in Nigeria. Hence, with this development, it was assumed that if Nigeria's educational system were equipped with the needed ICT infrastructure for teaching and learning, especially at the basic foundational levels the negative consequential impact of the pandemic would not have been badly felt and this is so because the Nigeria learning Passport (NLP), that has been recently implemented have the capability to bring about uniformity access to all learners in their diverse locations and goes a long way to strengthening basic educational system in particular (De Brouwer et al., 2020; FutureLeaarn. 2020; Hawkins, 2022). The strategy aimed to complement face-to-face conventional teaching mode and it is accessible either online or off-line platforms with the use of mobile technologies that would provide continuous access to quality education to learners in school, at home, rural or urban settings. The Nigeria Learning Passport (NLP) enhances traditional education delivery by enabling a hybrid program involving both classroom-based instruction and remote learning. The Nigerian Learning Passport addresses the digital divide by providing offline functionality, ensuring that even those in remote areas with limited internet connectivity can benefit from quality education. This inclusive approach ensures that no child is left behind due to geographical or technological constraints. (De Brouwer et al., 2020; FutureLeaarn. 2020; Hawkins, 2022)

Brief History of the Introduction of Nigeria Learning Passport Initiative in Nigeria
Globally, the educational sector has been revolutionized with the use of different forms of technology in teaching and learning and this is because the traditional classroom face-to-face is not yielding the more desired learning outcomes for learners which could be a result of a multitude of problems and challenges bedeviling the existing approach. For instance, the expected learning outcomes for children are not yielding more desirable results due to militating challenges including but not limited to the following: Overcrowding in the classroom, obsolete curriculum contents used for instructional process and above all the unplanned crises such as COVID-19 Pandemic that rampage the entire world which almost 1. 6 million formal school children where caged at home with already substantial number of the existing out of school children which generally the country is battling with before the pandemic. It was envisaged that, the Nigeria Learning Passport (NLP) an initiative which is a most recent effort by the federal government of Nigeria in collaboration and synergy with United Nations International children. Education Funds (UNICEF) aimed to reduce learning poverty among students and bridge gaps in regard to the digital literacy of basic education provision in the country gave birth to its introduction and was formally launched. This initiative is a digitalized learning platform which students interact with to access learning content based on basic education curriculum and sequentially organized and arranged around that purpose. (Samuel, 2022; Robert, 2022; UNESCO, 2020; UNESCO, 2020; UNDP, 2020)

The interactivity with the platform to access learning content is based on a series of subjects offered in basic education which could be online or offline, at home or in the school system. Initially, the project covered the core-north-west zone of the country that comprised Sokoto, Katsina Kebbi and Zamfara States, this was based on the fact that the mentioned states were considered educationally dis-advantage and backward in respect to the acquisition of basic

literacy education, however, the initiative has been scaled up to covered all the remaining Nigeria States including Abuja (FCT) (Russell, 2022; Samuel, 2022; Robert,2022; UNICEF-2021)

The rationale around the introduction of this novel idea is to help in the reduction of inequality and bridge the existing gaps in basic educational provisions in Nigeria, especially in the northern states. State governments were enjoyed to create an enabling circumstance and provide the additional resources and facilities to enable the initiative to flourish and be sustained by ensuring the Centre was well managed, more students were trained on the creation of ID and login process with the use of hand-held mobile technologies made available by the state government through basic education sector. The unique advantage of the platform is that, with mobile and online and offline capability learners continuously to have access to quality education, therefore, given its flexibility and adaptability, it would allow states to easily and quickly adopt the platform as their learning management systems or rather use it to complement existing digital learning efforts. The suite of online and offline functions that caters for deployment in places with poor connectivity often locations where children find themselves unable to access quality digital education. It was built to serve national curriculum content as well as global supplementary resources - Open Educational Resources (OERs) in supporting learners and improving learning outcomes. Nigeria's early childhood education provision, primary & secondary education, adolescent skills, and as well technical & vocational education can all benefit from it. (Russell, 2022; Samuel, 2022; Robert,2022; UNICEF, 2021)

Basic Educational Component and NLP in Basic Education

Before the advent of the COVID-19 Crisis, already the country's education sector is facing a series of challenges that have contributed to keeping more than 10.5 million Nigerian children out of school. One of these challenges is access to quality learning in the school or at home (informal education), and this ugly situation has been exacerbated by Boko-haram and Banditry attacks on learning institutions and abduction of students. These have made parents to became skeptical and fearful of sending their children to school. Several school attacks have disrupted educational activities in our basic education levels having millions of children have missed out on learning they would have acquired if they had been in the classroom. Efforts towards curtailing and providing future alternatives led to the introduction and launch of NLP initiatives in March 2022, The Nigeria government therefore, quickly embraced the learning platform with the aim of providing and delivering connectivity and digital learning content on a large scale. They have partners such as IHS Towers and Airtel who were responsible for connecting schools to the internet and providing zero-rated data to ensure effective deployment of the NLP are connected to schools and which would reach millions of children on digital learning. (Geoffrey, 2022; Hawkins, 2022: UNESCO, 2020; UNESCO, 2020; UNDP, 2020)

The Nigerian Learning Passport was basically designed for pre-primary, primary and secondary school children but the youth, and teachers have the advantage of using it too because they can access the digitalized curriculum and provides supportive measures needed on learning materials in all core curriculum subjects for primary one to six classes, and as well all junior and senior secondary school classes. All needed to be done by learner (s) is to ensure a successful full registration process is completed on the platform using any device with a web browser, or through the NLP mobile application and this would therefore, give access to a variety of high-quality learning contents domiciled in the platform. This development implies the country has joined 20 other countries in the world where the Learning Passport is reaching children with improved learning opportunities. It is a known fact that before COVID-19, about 10.5 million Nigerian children aged between 5 and 14 were not in school and more than 9.7 million children are at risk of never returning to school, meaning, their learning is now left behind. Hopefully, therefore, the Learning Passport can help change this ugly phenomenon (De Brouwer et al., 2020: FutureLeaarn. 2020; Hawkins, 2022)

It was envisaged that before the year-(2025) around 12 million Nigerian students would have increased access to education through the new Learning Passport Digital technologies which would be harnessed and transform the ways children learn, including in remote locations and in emergencies, this is because of its nature and characteristics of been utilized either Synchronous or Asynchronous using any available smart-phones and mobile device which have the capability of online and offline learning pattern for continuous education of the children, this importance breakthrough opportunity means ensuring continuity of learning for all children as well as the resilience of the education system to future uncertainty. Hence, it was seen as a change and reimagining of the education sector, particularly in Nigeria. (FGN, 2022; UNICEF, 2021; Partners, 2022)

Nigeria Learning Passport Platform is guided by an education model and this is because of its uniqueness which provides an opportunity for children to learn anywhere, any time and any place because of its nature of being online and offline at all times. The platform is comparable to be used with any form of mobile technology because of its flexibility and adaptability. This, therefore, allows states to easily and quickly adopt the platform as their learning management systems and use it to complement existing digital learning efforts. The platform has been developed with a suite functionality which takes caters for deployment in places with poor connectivity and of course locations where children might find themselves unable to access quality digital education. The platform serves national curriculum content as well as global supplementary resources Open Educational Resources (OERs) - to support learners and improve learning outcomes. The Learning Model of Nigeria Learning Passport is also an 'education model' for early childhood education, primary & secondary education, adolescent skills, and as well technical & vocational education. Every user has a personalized record of their learning history which is unique to all of them. (Geoffrey, 2022; Hawkins, 2022; UNESCO, 2020; UNESCO, 2020; UNDP, 2020)
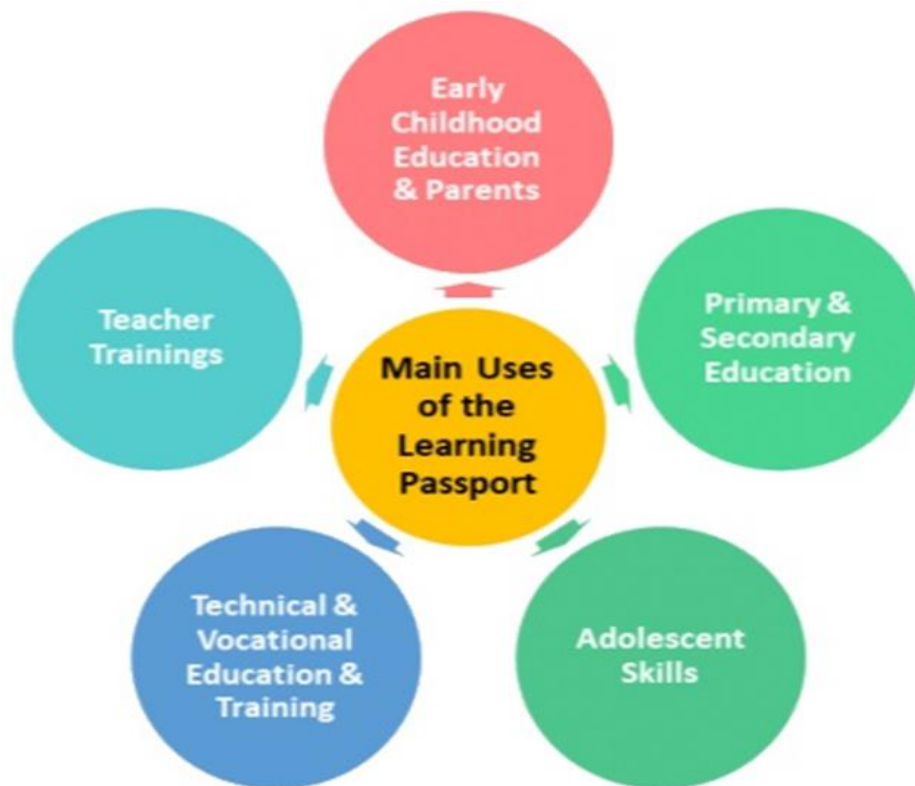
The NLP Education Learning Model- 2021

The identified NLP learning model and its features, imply the platform is guided by an illustrative education feature that is inter-link and integrated with the holistic Centre-core and the critical sub-elements of the stakeholders considered as beneficiaries of the initiative. The model and the platform in terms of their uniqueness that provide capability which enables continuous access to quality education is indeed a welcome ideology and commendable. Characteristically, from the design it is highly flexible and adaptable, giving every state an opportunity to easily adopt the platform as their learning management system or use it to complement existing digital learning. (UNESCO, 2020; UNESCO, 2020; UNDP, 2020)

Educational Advantages of NLP Initiative for the Basic Education Sector
There are numerous educational advantages to the use of NLP in basic education especially, for students who are already enrolled in formal education, the Nigerian Learning Passport serves as a powerful tool for supplemental

learning. It provides a rich repository of interactive and high-quality content that complements classroom instruction, helping students grasp core concepts more effectively. More specifically,

- The initiative provides and awakens government responsibility (Ministry of Education) to re-enact the e-learning platform, with detailed core-curriculum contents across basic education subjects, which was arranged in a logical order.
- Reveal students' searching skills and competency of core-curriculum contents of studies, that is Science, Arts and or Commercial, since most of them are digital natives.
- Reveal the status of the studio's functionality needed with respect to supporting roles' expectations on freely accessing subject contents by users.
- Exposes or brings to limelight major challenges and impediments affecting the smooth interactions of students with the platform either while in school, ICT Centre or rather at home.
- Provides an opportunity for students to engage in extra-lesson, on subjects or topics found challenging.
- Have the advantage of providing a support system to both learners in school and outside

Possible Challenges around the implementations of NLP for Basic Education System

The whole world witnessed a total disruption of the educational system from elementary to tertiary level which was a result of the covid-lockdown. This ordeal has more negative impacts on the educational development of the country, this is obvious because prior to this incidence Nigeria's Basic Education Sector had been negatively influenced by politics of no total commitment and the major crisis of out-of-school-children; serial insecurity as well as kidnapping & rural banditry. Hence, with recent milestone achievements of the implemented NLP Project there is high hope for improvement in learning of basic education. The following can be seen as specific challenges which if not taken care of can affect the effective implementation process and the overall success of the project these include:

- The challenge around the school connectivity and the community in respect to user access when interacting with the NLP Platform
- Availability and access to devices (Mobile phones, Laptops)
- The issue around NLP use of Ziro bite data and or education data plan to be available for users' connectivity in school
- The issue around NLP access to all Nigeria schools and students irrespective of either being located in rural or urban
- The issue around needs to conduct an assessment on students' learning outcome on NLP project
- The challenges of the effectiveness of the three (3) support systems viz: Support from the use; Support from the technology and Support from the community
- Ensuring that the users (Learners), are adopting, navigating successfully as expected and gaining knowledge from the curriculum contents which would inform the learning out come

Conclusion

It is important to note that, the Nigeria Learning Passport project, if given all the needed support from the government and the stakeholders has the capability to improve the digital literacy of our students in the basic educational levels on one hand and of course with its online-offline capability in term of its engagements with learners will bring about learning any time and in anywhere.

Recommendations

It is important to reiterate that, for the successful implementation process of NLP, in all basic education levels in Nigeria, the following recommendations are paramount:

- The government, especially, ministry of education who were the brain behind this initiative should ensure all schools and communities have high connectivity in order for users of the NLP Platform to interact successfully
- They should ensure the provision of customized devices (Mobile phones, Laptops) to learners
- Ziro bite data and or education data plan to be made available and accessible for users' connectivity in school
- NLP should be made accessible to all Nigeria schools and students irrespective of either been located in a rural or urban setting

- Ministry of Education should come up with a modality of how to conduct an assessment of students' learning outcomes on the use NLP platform for learning
- The three (3) support systems viz: Support from the use; Support from the technology and Support from the community should be ensured since about 30,500 stakeholders have been trained for the program support system

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