UTS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

EXPLORING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A NIGERIAN CASE STUDY OF NGOS' USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY FOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION.

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

PhD

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Victoria Ekwughe declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of PhD, in the School Communication, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother Mrs. Joy Ekwughe, for her unfailing strength and never giving up on her dreams despite the challenges she encountered. And my father Mr Christian Ekwughe, for never giving up on your daughters, believing in us and providing all the support we need to be our best.

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LIST OF IMAGES

Image 1: Image depicting one of the aims of a programme …… 118
Image 2: The winning group for the project in NGO A ……..…….. 120
Image 3: An image depicting the aim of NGO B …… 122
Image 4: An image from NGO B depicting the aim of one of their programmes ….. 123
Image 5: Training session on Robotics …… 125
Image 6: Training Session on African bag ……..…… 135
Image 7: Training Session on digital printing ……..…….. 136
Image 8: Participants in a training session by NGO B ……..…….. 143
Image 9: NGO Cs Content post In English and Hausa ……..…… 146
Image 10: NGO Cs Facebook Post in Pidgin and Standard English …… 147
Image 11: Facebook post by NGO C …… 147
Image 12: NGO Cs Facebook post on Breastfeeding babies …….. 148
Image 13: Facebook post by NGO C fighting against Gender-based violence …… 148
Image 14: NGO C's Facebook post educating people on actions to take against Gender-based violence …… 148
Image 15: NGO C's Facebook post sensitising the people on breast cancer …… 149
Image 16: Participants displaying their finished Ankara bag ……149
Image 17: Facebook post by NGO A to encourage women to pursue excellence …… 150
Image 18: Facebook post by NGO B to encourage and motivate women…….. 150
Image 19: Facebook post by NGO B promoting their programme …….. 152
Image 20: Screenshot of Facebook comment …….. 152
Image 21: Screenshot from Facebook comment …….. 153
Image 22: Screenshot of Facebook Comment …….. 153
Image 23: Screenshot from Facebook live stream ……..…… 154
Image 24: NGO A WhatsApp post advising participants about opportunities for professional development …….. 158
Image 25: NGO A WhatsApp post about employment opportunities …….. 158

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Statistics of Male to Female Population in Nigeria 16
Table 2: Key Milestone of Education in Nigeria..... 29
Table 3: Summary of the NGOs ……..109
Table 4: NGOs and Numbers of Facebook Followers…… 146
Table 5: Facebook post for NGO A from May 2018 – October 2018……. 154
Table 6: Facebook post for NGO B from May 2018 – October 2018……. 155
Table 7: Facebook post for NGO C from May 2018 – October 2018 ……155
Table 8: Number of Facebook video contents …… 156
Table9: Number of YouTube Subscribers and Video Uploads …….. 159
Table 10: Number of YouTube Videos …….. 160

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASUU - Academic Staff Union of Universities

AVSI - Association of Volunteers in International Service

CEDAW - Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CEPWOP - Civic Education and Participation for Women Project

CIL - Communication Investment Limited

CMC - Computer-mediated communication

DE - Distance Education

EFA – Education for all

ERGP - Economic Recovery and Growth Plan

EWEI- Empowering Women for Excellence Initiative Nigeria

FME - Federal Ministry of Education

FRN – Federal Republic of Nigeria

FSBEP - Family Support Basic Education Programme

GSM - General system for mobile

HGSFHP - Home Grown School Feeding and Health programme

ICT – Information Communication Technology

i-CLAP - Interactive Child Learning Aid Project

IPPF - The International Planned Parenthood Federation

ISP - Internet service providers

LGA – Local Government Areas

MDGs - Millennium Development Goals

MIT - Massachusetts Institute of Technology

MOOCs – Massive Open Online Courses

MSP - Ministerial Strategic Plan

NBC – Nigeria British Council

NCC - Nigerian Communications Commission

NCMLNFE - National Commission for Mass Literacy and Non-Formal Education

NDP - National Development Plan

NEPAD - New Partnership for Africa's Development

NFE – Non-formal Education

NMDG - Nigeria Millennium Development Goals

NGN – Nigerian Naira

NGO – Non-government Organisation

NITEL - Nigeria Telecommunication

NPC - National Population Commission

NPE – National Policy on Education

OCW - Open Course Ware

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development

OERs - Open Educational Resources

OLPC - One Laptop Per Child

PDA – Personal Digital Assistant

SAGEN - Strategy for the Acceleration of Girls Education in Nigeria

SMW – Social Media Week Lagos

STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

TA – Thematic Analysis

UBE – Universal Basic Education

UBEP - Universal Basic Education Policy

UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF - The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNO - United Nations Organisations

UPE – Universal Primary Education

VSAT - Very Small Aperture Terminal

WAAW -Working to Advance STEM education for African Women Foundation.

WSIS - World Summit on the Information Society

W.TEC- Women Technology Empowerment Centre

WNGO - Women NGO

WWW - World Wide Web

ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study explored women's empowerment through programmes of non-formal education (NFE) offered by Nigerian NGOs using digital technologies. Women in Nigeria have been systematically disadvantaged in education and employment, and programmes of non-formal education have been established throughout the country, especially by women's NGOs, in an attempt to redress this inequitable situation. The ability to use digital technologies has been considered fundamental for the success of individuals and for the development of the country. Thus, the concepts of empowerment, non-formal education and the use of digital technologies were central to the study.

NFE programmes offered by three Nigerian women's NGOs were the focus of this study, which combined online and offline ethnographic methods. Data was collected from NGO staff and programme participants using observation and semi-structured interviews. The online presence of the NGOs was investigated using netnography. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

The findings of the study show that the aims of the programmes align with the aspirations of participants, to improve the standard of living, and thus might be considered empowering. However, selection criteria, the requirements of sponsors and the perceptions of NGO staff meant that many women were excluded. Infrastructural problems including access to electricity undermined some efforts to develop skills. NGO staff, volunteers and trainers were not always able or willing to exploit fully the possibilities of the range of digital technologies, but the use of WhatsApp by two NGOs was particularly successful in supporting learning and in extending the experiences of participants. In these programmes, digital technologies were a two-edged sword, providing a competitive advantage to those with formal education and pre-existing skills thereby further marginalising those without.

While the empowerment framework assigns equal importance to the tenets of the framework, this study concludes that in the Nigerian context of these three NGOs, the empowerment framework demonstrates that the significance of infrastructure can outweigh the interplay of various factors and the importance of agency. Importantly, the study reinforces that the digital divide is less about access to equipment and more about opportunities created or denied through social norms and expectations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page

Certificate of Original Authorship……. i

Dedication……..ii

Acknowledgement ……..iii

List of Images ……..iv

List of Tables ……..... v

List of Abbreviations ……. vi

Abstract ……. ix

Table of Contents ……. x

CHAPTER ONE 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS..... 6

1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES 6

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY 7

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY 10

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY.....11

1.7 CONTEXTUAL DEFINITION 11

1.7.1 Digital Technologies 11

1.7.2 Empowerment 11

1.7.3 Women 12

1.7.4 NFE 12

1.7.5 Digital Divide.....12

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS 12

CHAPTER TWO 15

2.1 INTRODUCTION 15

2.2 GEOGRAPHY OF NIGERIA 15

2.3 NIGERIA'S ECONOMY 16

2.4 SOCIO-POLITICAL TERRAIN OF NIGERIA.....17

2.5 THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (NPE) AND THE EDUCATION LAWS OF THE SCHOOL REPUBLIC (1977- UNTIL DATE). 19
2.6 ICT POLICY IN NIGERIA 23
2.7 GENDER NORMS IN NIGERIA 24
2.8 OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN NIGERIA 26
2.9 NFE AS A STRATEGY FOR WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA 30
2.10 NGOs AND NFE IN NIGERIA 31
2.11 NFE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ICTs 34
2.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY 34
CHAPTER THREE 35
3.1 INTRODUCTION 35
3.2 CHALLENGES TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT 36
3.2.1 Patriarchy 36
3.2.2 Digital Divide 39
3.3 CONCEPTUALISING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT 41
3.3.1 Feminist Theory 43
3.3.2 Education Empowerment Theory 44
3.4 WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY 45
3.5 WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND NFE 52
3.5.1 Economic empowerment 56
3.5.2 Political empowerment 59
3.5.3 Micro/household empowerment 60
3.5.4 Psychological empowerment 62
3.5.5 Knowledge empowerment 62
3.6 THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN NFE 65
3.6.1 APPROACHES TO THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN EDUCATION 67
3.6.2 CHALLENGES OF ADOPTING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR NFE 71
3.7 BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: NGOs AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT 73
3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY 75
CHAPTER FOUR 77
4.1 INTRODUCTION 77
4.2 PHILOSOPHY OF RESEARCH APPROACH 77
4.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITIONING 78
4.4 POSITION OF THE RESEARCHER 81
4.5 RESEARCH DESIGN 83
4.5.1 Qualitative Research 83

4.6 RESEARCH METHOD....83
4.6.1 Case Study....83
4.7 RESEARCH APPROACH....85
4.7.1 Ethnography....85
4.7.2 Netnography....93
4.8 SAMPLING METHOD....98
4.9 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS....99
4.9.1 Thematic Analysis (TA)....99
4.10 JUSTIFICATION FOR ADOPTING THE RESEARCH METHOD....101
4.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS....102
4.12 REFLEXIVITY....103
4.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY....106
CHAPTER FIVE....107
5.1 INTRODUCTION....107
5.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON CASE ORGANIZATIONS....108
5.2.1 NGO A.....109
5.2.2 NGO B....111
5.2.3 NGO C....113
5.3 TARGET AUDIENCE FOR PROGRAMMES....114
5.4 PROGRAMMES AND COURSE CONTENT....116
5.5 STRUCTURE OF TRAINING....118
5.6 PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAMMES....121
5.6.1 Knowledge Empowerment....121
5.6.2 Economic Empowerment:....135
5.6.3 Psychological Empowerment:....142
5.7 THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY....144
5.7.1 Access to Internet Facilities....144
5.7.2 Informational purpose:....146
5.7.3 Publicity Purpose:....151
5.7.4 Educational purpose:....156
5.8 PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE OF ONLINE LEARNING....161
5.9 CHALLENGES TO USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY....164
5.9.1 Infrastructure....164
5.9.2 Digital Divide/Illiteracy:....166
5.9.3 Lack of trained staff....167

5.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY 168
CHAPTER 6 170
6.1 THE EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK 170
6.1.1 Agency 170
6.1.2 Resources: 173
6.1.3 Institutional structures 184
6.1.4 Outcome of development 188
6.2 RECONSIDERING THE EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK 189
6.3 TECHNOLOGY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT 189
6.3.1 Empowerment and its challenges 189
6.4 CONFRONTING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE 192
6.5 POWER RELATIONS 198
6.6 CONCLUSION 201
CHAPTER SEVEN 204
7.1 SUMMARY 204
7.2 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE 207
7.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR NGOs 210
7.4 FURTHER RESEARCH 214
7.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY 217
7.6 CONCLUSION 218
Appendices
Appendix One: Participant Brief 220
Appendix Two: Participant Informed Consent Form: Interview 222
Appendix Three: Participant Informed Consent Form: Participant Observation 223
Appendix Four: Interview Guide for programme participants 224
Appendix Five: Interview Guide for programme directors 225
Bibliography 226