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Determinants of Change Agents' Participation in Career Development Programmes in Oyo State, Nigeria

OLAYANJU Susan Olumide
Department of Adult Education
Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria
sucanolayanju3@gmail.com

OSU, U. C.
Department of Adult Education
Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria
charles1759@yahoo.co.uk / Ocid.org/0000-0002-8882-7883

Abstract
This study investigated the determinants of change agents' participation in career development programmes in Oyo State, Nigeria. Specifically, it examined the availability of programmes, the personal and institutional factors influencing engagement, and change agents' perceptions of the relevance of these programmes to their job performance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The target population comprised change agents, including community development officers (CDOs), in selected Local Government Areas (LGAs). A sample of 150 respondents was drawn using a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage). The findings revealed that career development programmes for CDOs are generally inadequate, with a weighted average of 2.95. Although programmes like training and workshops exist in principle, they are limited in availability and effectiveness. Both personal and institutional factors moderately influence engagement (weighted average mean of 2.82). Institutional barriers such as heavy workloads (Mean=2.69), lack of funding (Mean=2.87), and poor accessibility of training venues (Mean=2.94) were identified as significant constraints. Furthermore, CDOs' perception of the relevance of these programmes to their job performance was only moderate (weighted average mean of 2.97), indicating a perceived disconnect between training content and daily job demands. The study concludes that systemic institutional weaknesses and a lack of practical relevance undermine the participation and impact of career development for change agents. It recommends strengthening institutional support, aligning training content with job realities, and improving access to learning opportunities.

Keywords: Change Agents Participation, Career Development Programmes, Gender, Institutional Factors

Introduction

Career development schemes are increasingly integral to enhancing workforce professionalisation, organizational flexibility, and efficiency in knowledge-based economies (OECD, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2023). The acceleration of technological change, globalization, and evolving labor market dynamics necessitate lifelong learning for both individuals and organizations. Lifelong learning has thus become essential in adapting to continuous global changes and emerging technologies (Osu, Ajiye, & Eze, 2024).

Within this context, change agents such as teachers, community development workers, extension agents, and organizational leaders are pivotal in driving reforms and facilitating sustainable development. Lifelong learning is perceived as an ongoing process, accessible whenever individuals recognize a need to acquire new skills (Osu et al., 2024).

Active engagement in career development programs is crucial not only for individual growth but also for institutional capacity building and broader sustainable development impact (Abiona & Osu, 2020; Adefuye, 2018). As noted by Abiona and Osu (2020), change agents serve as facilitators of information exchange and co-creation of solutions with community stakeholders. They mobilize grassroots participation, build local capacities, and empower communities to address challenges autonomously and sustainably. In practice, community development officers, NGO facilitators, local leaders, and extension workers are positioned as key agents of change, enabling communities to transition from passive recipients of services to active participants and owners of development processes.

Despite the growing popularity of career development programs, participation among change agents, especially in developing countries like Nigeria, remains inconsistent and limited (Abiona & Osu, 2020; Adefuye, 2018). Factors such as individual motivation, financial limitations, organizational support, and the availability of learning options significantly influence participation rates (OECD, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2023). However, prevailing challenges include insufficient time, high program costs, inadequate institutional support, and lack of awareness (OECD, 2025). In Nigeria, these issues are compounded by systemic weaknesses, poor funding, and limited policy implementation, alongside socio-cultural barriers like gender inequality (Abah, 2010; Chen, 2024). Additionally, digital learning opportunities increase access but highlight digital divides and low technological capacity. Existing literature often overlooks the specific determinants affecting change agents, necessitating further empirical research tailored to the Nigerian context. This study addresses these gaps by examining the factors influencing change agents' participation in career development programs.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed at determining factors influencing change agent engagement in career development programmes. While the specific objectives are to:

1. identify the major career development programmes available to community development officers in the selected local governments.
2. investigate the personal factors such as age, gender, educational level and institutional factors which are funding, support, workload influencing participation.
3. assess the perception of CDOs regarding the relevance of career development programmes to their roles.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What career development programmes are available to community development officers in the selected LGAs?
2. What personal and institutional factors influence their engagement in these programmes?
3. How do CDOs perceive the relevance of career development programmes to their job performance?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Human Capital Theory, which provides a comprehensive lens for understanding the determinants of change agents' participation in career development programmes. As advanced by Becker (1964), the theory posits that individuals invest in education and training to enhance their productivity, skills, and earning potential. Participation in career development programmes is therefore viewed as an investment decision influenced by perceived costs and benefits. According to this theory, change agents are more likely to engage in professional development when the expected returns such as career advancement, improved job performance, and increased income outweigh the associated costs

(OECD, 2024). Conversely, when barriers such as high costs, lack of time, or limited organizational support outweigh perceived benefits, participation is likely to decline.

Methods and Materials

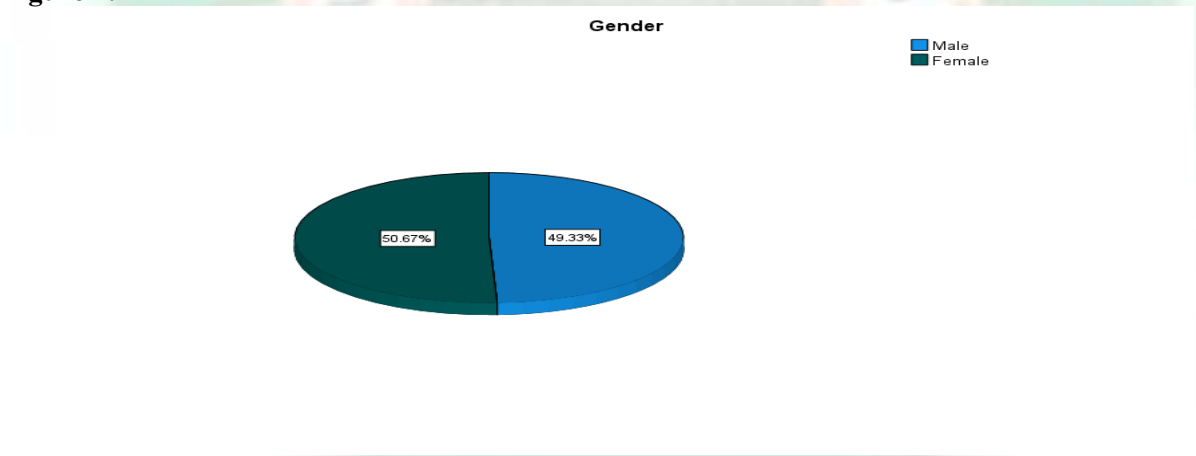
This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate as it allows for the systematic collection of data from a population to examine the relationships between variables influencing participation in career development programmes. The target population consisted of change agents, including educators, community development officers (CDOs), extension workers, and organizational leaders involved in development programmes within selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Oyo State. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed in the selection of the sample. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select 150 Community Development Officers from six secretariat in Ibadan, Oyo State. Stage 1: Six secretariats within the city of Ibadan were randomly selected for the study these are: Ibadan north, Akinyele, Ido, Ibadan North West, Ibadan South West, and Ibadan North East. 25 respondents in each secretariat will be selected, and these shall be the officer cadres.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into sections corresponding to the research questions, measuring the availability of programmes, influencing factors, and perceived relevance using a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). A pilot study was conducted, and reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70. The data were analysed with descriptive and inferential Statistical tools, such as percentages, means and standard deviation will be employed to present a summary of respondents' opinions, while inferential statistics such as Pearson's correlation analysis to analyse the correlation between change agents and Career Development Programmes and Regression analysis to determine the degree which Community Development Officers and their functions impact on their career development.

Results

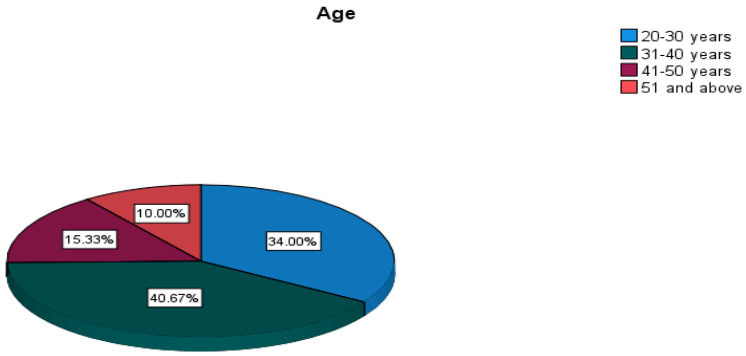
Demographic Information Analysis

Figure 1: Gender



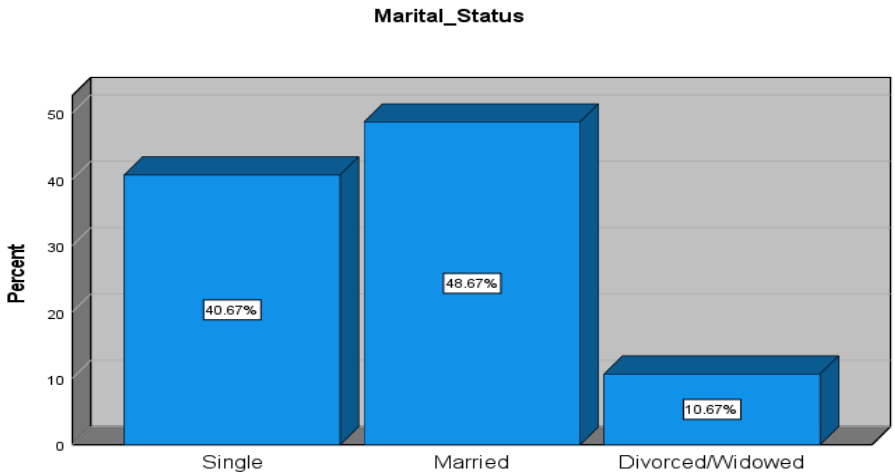
The demographic features of the respondents show the distribution of the gender as 74 49.3% were male and 76 50.7% were female. This reveals the representation of both male and female within the workforce of the selected local government areas and the possible gender variations in employment or participation in career-related activities within the study context.

Figure 2: Age



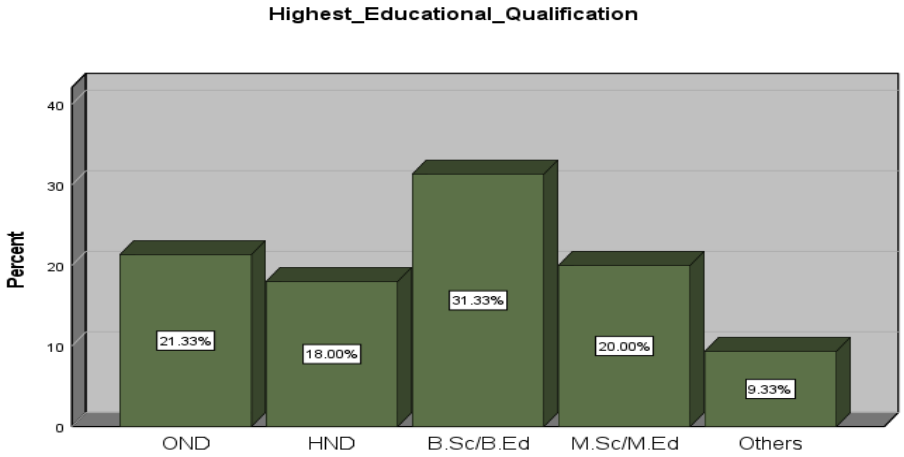
In terms of age, the respondents were mostly in the bracket of economically active ages. The majority were in the 31-40 years category at 61 respondent 40.7%, followed by 20-30 years old at 51 respondents 34.0%. This means that a significant percentage of the work force is fairly young and is at a crucial point of career development. Less age group were represented, with 23 respondents 15.3% aged 41-50 years and only 15 respondents 10.0% aged 51 years and above.

Figure 3: Marital Status



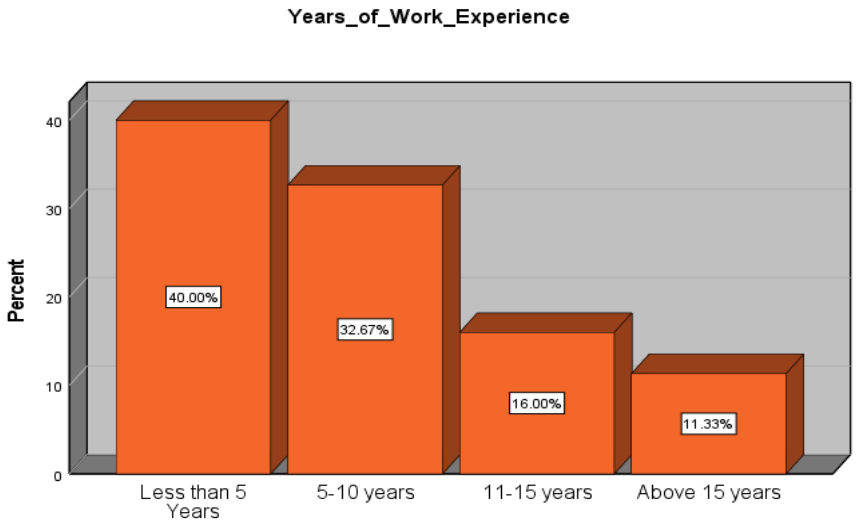
In terms of the marital status, almost half of the respondents were married, where 73 people had married 48.7 percent, and 61 people were single 40.7%. A smaller proportion, 16 respondents 10.7% were divorced or widowed. This distribution indicates that a majority of the respondents have family responsibilities which could affect their availability, motivation and participation in career development and training programmes.

Figure 4: Educational Qualification



The educational qualification of the respondents shows moderately educated workforce. Those with qualifications of B.Sc/B.Ed were the largest group consisting of 47 respondents i.e. 31.3%, followed by those who holds M.Sc/M.Ed degree with 30 respondents i.e. 20.0%. Respondents with OND and HND qualifications accounted for 32 21.3% and 27 18.0% respectively and 14 respondents 9.3% had other qualifications. This diversity in educational background implies a diversity in professional exposure and training requirements in the workforce.

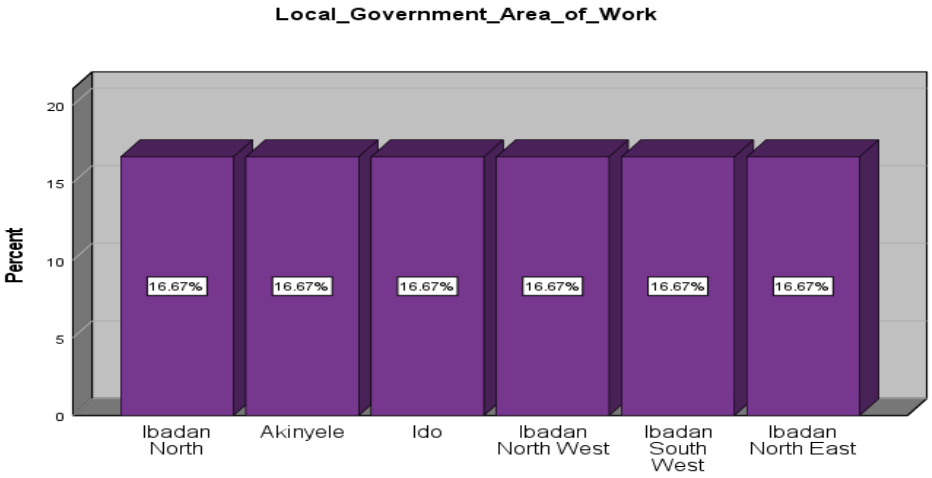
Figure 5: Years of Work Experience as a CDO



Analysis of years of work experience shows that a significant proportion of respondents were relatively early career. Sixty respondents, 40.0%, had less than 5 years of work experience whereas, 49 respondents, 32.7% had between 5-10 years. Fewer respondents had extensive experience i.e. 24 respondents, 16.0% had an experience of 11-15 years and 17 11.3% had more than 15 years of experience. This means that many of the respondents may still be actively seeking opportunities for skills acquisition and career

advancement.

Figure 6: Local Government Area of Work



The distribution of respondents in the local government areas were uniform with 25 respondents 16.7% recruited from each of the six selected local government areas i.e. Ibadan North, Akinyele, Ido, Ibadan North West, Ibadan South West and Ibadan North East. This equal representation increases the balance and comparability of responses across locations and helps to increase the generalisability of the study's findings within the selected local government areas.

Research Question One: What career development programmes are available to community development officers in the selected LGAs?

Table 1: Available Career Development Programmes

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	Regular training programmes are provided to enhance my professional skills	62 41.3%	25 16.7%	10 6.7%	53 35.3%	3.05	0.89
2	Workshops organized by the local government motivate me to engage in career development	22 14.7%	56 37.3%	54 36.0%	18 12.0%	2.96	1.04
3	Access to seminars on community development increases my willingness to participate in professional growth	17 11.3%	35 23.3%	39 26.0%	59 39.3%	2.93	1.04
4	Mentorship services are available and help me stay engaged in learning opportunities	13 8.7%	27 18.0%	70 46.7%	40 26.7%	2.91	0.89
5	The availability of e-learning platforms encourages my active involvement in development programmes	53 35.3%	29 19.3%	59 39.3%	9 6.0%	3.04	0.89
6	Study leave or time allowances are given for attending training programmes	12 8.0%	36 24.0%	60 40.0%	42 28.0%	2.88	0.91
7	My organization sponsors or supports officers to attend conferences relevant to	16 10.7%	34 22.7%	47 31.3%	53 35.3%	2.91	1.00

	our roles						
8	Field-based or hands-on training services make learning more practical and engaging for me	17 11.3%	31 20.7%	47 31.3%	55 36.7%	2.93	1.01
9	Career counselling services are provided to guide my development choices	57 38.0%	31 20.7%	46 30.7%	16 10.7%	2.96	1.03
10	Refresher courses are offered regularly and keep me updated in my role	19 12.7%	29 19.3%	49 32.7%	53 35.3%	2.91	1.03
Weighted Average Mean= 2.95							

Source: Field work 2026

Table 1 shows that the weighted average mean score for the availability of career development programmes is 2.95. This indicates a low to moderate level of availability. While some programmes are reportedly available (e.g., regular training, Mean=3.05; e-learning platforms, Mean=3.04), their effectiveness and consistency are questionable. Programmes requiring more structured institutional support, such as study leave (Mean=2.88) and mentorship services (Mean=2.91), recorded lower mean scores, suggesting they are largely unavailable.

Research Question Two: What personal and institutional factors influence their engagement in these programmes?

Table 2: Personal and Institutional Factors Influencing Engagement**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	My age affects how often I engage in career development programmes	24 16.0%	34 22.7%	49 32.7%	43 28.7%	2.74	1.05
2	My level of education shapes how I value and participate in training	49 32.7%	31 20.7%	44 29.3%	26 17.3%	2.88	1.09
3	Family or personal responsibilities sometimes limit my participation	50 33.3%	32 21.3%	51 34.0%	17 11.3%	2.89	0.99
4	I feel motivated to attend training when the content aligns with my goals	21 14.0%	37 24.7%	41 27.3%	51 34.0%	2.81	1.06
5	Heavy workload often prevents me from participating in training sessions	26 17.3%	34 22.7%	50 33.3%	40 26.7%	2.69	1.05
6	Lack of funding discourages me from engaging in professional development	45 30.0%	37 24.7%	16 10.7%	52 34.7%	2.87	1.01
7	The location or accessibility of training venues influences my participation	50 33.3%	29 19.3%	56 37.3%	15 10.0%	2.94	0.96
Weighted Average Mean= 2.82							

Source: Field work 2026

The results in Table .2 reveal a weighted average mean of 2.82, indicating that personal and institutional factors have a moderate impact on engagement. Personal factors like family responsibilities (Mean=2.89) and education level (Mean=2.88) show influence, while institutional barriers such as venue accessibility (Mean=2.94), lack of funding (Mean=2.87), and heavy workload (Mean=2.69) present concrete obstacles to participation.

Research Question Three: How do CDOs perceive the relevance of career development programmes to their job performance?

Table 3: Perception of the relevance of career development programmes by CDOs

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	Career development programmes have positively impacted my job performance	21 14.0%	55 36.7%	19 12.7%	55 36.7%	2.99	1.03
2	Skills and knowledge gained from these	53	27	10	60	3.09	0.92

	programmes are useful in my daily duties	35.3%	18.0%	6.7%	40.0%		
3	I believe these programmes contribute to my long-term professional growth	50 33.3%	39 26.0%	45 30.0%	16 10.7%	2.98	1.00
Weighted Average Mean= 2.97							

Source: Field work 2026

Table 3 shows a weighted average mean of 2.97, suggesting a moderate perception of relevance. While respondents acknowledge a contribution to long-term growth (Mean=2.98), the mean score for the usefulness of skills in daily duties (Mean=3.09) indicates a perceived disconnect between programme content and the practical realities of their jobs.

Discussion of Findings

The result that the existing career development programmes are in most cases insufficient (Weighted Mean=2.95) is not surprising given studies on staff development in local government in Nigeria that revealed the difficulties of planning for and implementing effective professional development. Yusuf and Salisu (2024) and Eze, Mark, and Ezeamu (2025) argue that capacity building exercises are disconnected from real skill requirements, underfunded and centralized, diminishing their effect on workforce capacity. According to Abiona and Osu (2017), Training Times, Physically, Socially, Intellectually and Psychologically is Crucial to not only increasing the output level but also the upgrading of human resources in an organization. The low impact of existing programmes also attunes with the fact that formal mentor scheme is thin (if not absent) in a lot of Nigerian organizations (Kachalla & Chiroma, 2024), which translates to the overall low mean score for mentorship within this study (Mean=2.91).

The findings derived that engagement was affected by personal factors and situational factors (Weighted Mean=2.82) aligned with the empirical literature, such as Ituma et al. (2024) stated that poor funding and poor conditions of service have a negative influence on employee participation in developmental activities. Correspondingly, research on professional development and the public service indicate that family commitments, time scarcity and personal motivation play a role in individuals' decision to participate (Awofeso, Adekunle, & Eze, 2020). Consistent with personal factors exerting a moderate influence, as discovered here, it also supports Eze et al. (2025) aid: "where personal aspirations are not tied to programmes, participation could be passive". The dominant role of institutional barriers seems to confirm the observation made by Akinbo and Ogah (2025) as well as by Bashir Yusuf and colleagues (2024) who concluded that insufficient funding and inadequate institutional support continue to pose challenges in the training of local government officials.

In conclusion, the moderate level of programme relevance (Weighted Mean=2.97) signals a gap in expectation. The observation that CDOs do not currently have a strong sense of how programmes will directly benefit them in doing their daily work (Mean=3.09) clearly demonstrates that there is a need to make training more practical, job-related and tightly connected to the real work and challenges – of the officers. This is consistent with the general advocacy found in the literature for the need to strategically invest in systematic and needs-based professional development to enhance both engagement and performance (Eze et al., 2025).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that the participation of change agents (CDOs) in career development programmes in Oyo State is hampered by a combination of inadequate programme availability, significant institutional barriers, and a perceived lack of practical relevance to their daily work. While individual factors play a role, systemic issues such as poor funding, heavy workloads, and inaccessible training venues are more potent deterrents. To enhance participation and maximize the impact of these programmes, the following recommendations are made:

1. Local governments must develop and implement structured, consistent, and well-funded career development policies. This includes establishing regular training schedules, providing study leave, and creating formal mentorship programmes.
2. The content of career development programmes should be developed based on a thorough needs assessment of CDOs' actual job demands. A shift towards more practical, field-based, and hands-on training is essential.
3. Efforts must be made to reduce workload pressures on officers to free up time for learning. Training venues should be decentralized and made more accessible, and alternative delivery methods, such as mobile learning, should be explored to overcome logistical challenges.
4. While e-learning platforms were noted as available (Mean=3.04), their potential is not fully realized. Investment in digital infrastructure and digital literacy training is needed to bridge the digital divide and ensure effective participation in online learning.

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