

The Impact of Information and Communication Technology on Youth and its Vocational Opportunities in Nigeria

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Abstract

The unemployment rate in all countries especially developing nations (like Nigeria) has been in geometric increase to the extent that it is not only becoming unbearable but also uncontrollable to address the socio-economic issue. Considering the alarming rate of unemployment in these nations, it has become one of the major issues used by politicians to canvass for political support during elections. However, much seems not to have been achieved in this direction. This paper is therefore written to explore the impact of ICT on youth and its vocational opportunities in Nigeria. The researchers elicit data from both primary and secondary data. The paper concludes that development of ICT will provide employment opportunities to the youths thereby securing the nation both socially and economically. Thus the paper recommends that, potentials of youth should be upgraded to encourage the application of ICT.

Keywords: ICT, youth, employment, vocational opportunity, development.

Introduction

The acronym ICT stands for Information and Communication Technology. Though, there is no generally acceptable definition of the term ICT, various attempts have been made by several authors. Wali (2001) sees ICT to comprise of various kinds and sizes of computers. The computers are connected via telephones to facilitate the sharing of the data they house and the data comes in many forms such as texts, sounds and pictures. Adeoti (2005) concur with the above and also added that ICT is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computers and satellite, etc.

The unemployment rate in Nigeria is reported by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). The unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 23.90 percent in 2011 from 21.10 percent in 2010. From 2006 until 2011, Nigeria unemployment rate averaged 14.6 percent reaching an all-time high of 23.9 percent in December 2011 and records a low rate of 5.3 percent in December 2006. In Nigeria, the unemployment rate measures the number of people actively looking for a job as a percentage of the labour force. The unemployment rate indicated above is not only worrisome but also alarming and shows that government cannot tackle it alone. Therefore, exploring the vocational opportunities in Information and Communication Technology devices such as full range of computers, phones and telecommunication gadgets, etc., sales and services purpose, application software development would be able to tackle the problem of unemployment in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this research is being carried out.

Statement of the problem

Employment opportunities for the Nigerian citizens have direct link to their socio-economic lives. More so, it enhances safe and egalitarian society. However, Nigeria in recent time have been threatened with alarming scenario as a result of unemployment which resultant effects ranges from extreme poverty, hunger to insecurity. Consequently, the application of Information and Communication Technology have not be vigorously harnessed to its fullest despite its perceived vocational and wealth creation opportunities. Hence, this is the thrust of the research.

Objective of the study

The main objective of this research is to examine the impact of information and communication technology on youths and its vocational opportunities in Nigeria. This paper also explores the socio-economic impact of ICT on the youths in particular and Nigeria in general.

Research Proposition

Utilization of opportunities provided by the information and communication technology will address the unemployment problem in Nigeria.

Hypotheses

- Ho:** information and communication technology will not increase the vocational opportunities of youth.
- Hi:** information and communication technology will increase the vocational opportunities of youth.
- Ho:** the application of information and communication technology will not address the problems of unemployment.
- Hi:** the application of information and communication technology will address the problems of unemployment.

Scope of the Study

This research is on the impact of information and communication technology on youths and its vocational opportunities in Nigeria. Considering the broad nature of the topic, the study focuses on Idah Local Government Area for the period between 2008 and 2012.

Conceptual Clarification

Information and communication technology is an electronic technology for collecting, storing, processing and communicating information (Butcher, 2003). ICT according to Butcher is categorized into two, namely: those which process information such as computer systems and those which disseminate information such as telecommunication system. To Laudon, Trowel and Laudon (1994), ICT include all the different means, methods, tools that humans have used throughout history to help manage information, conduct business, and communicate with others and better understand the world around them.

To Frenzel (1996), ICT is seen as computer systems, telecommunication, networks and multi-media application while Osatuohien (2008) concurs with Olasanmi, Ayoola and Kareem (2012) that ICT is the application of knowledge for the execution of given task which entails skills and processes necessary for carrying out activities in a given context.

Youth according to Matthew (2007), refer to, the stage in life of physical growth and psychological development; this means the growth of all the energies through which

normal individual human is built up. More so, Ugoriji (2002) noted that youth acquires unrepeatable character personality and individuality through contact with people on the level of different duties, arts and science, hence, learn the truth about the truth; man and the world in which they live. Vocation is the technical application of skills to produce desired result in which skills are acquired through an in-depth training, mentorship, apprenticeship which in turn produce a relationship between the trainer and the trainees (Bala, Akpihi and Yusuf, 2012). It is the strong feeling that one ought to pursue a particular career. It involves a training scheme which provides a range of courses to meet the education and training needs of the citizens.

Impact of Information and Communication Technology

More often than ever before, technology has transformed the way younger generation communicate and access information. Two major assumptions underlie the role of ICT: the first is that the proliferation of these technologies is causing rapid transformations in all areas of life; the second is that ICT function to unify and standardize culture. It is on the basis of these assumptions that the term “information age and globalization” evolved (Adeoti 2004).

Studies have shown that the ICT era have created various types of jobs from Chief Information Officer in big enterprises or government agencies to the computer shop operators since early 90’s. Vendors of hand held phones and their accessories are common sight in every community. There are various types of ICT based businesses such as document processing centres, cybercafé, computer training centres, computer services and repairs, hand set services and repairs, internet, programming, cable and satellite TV installations, etc. with very little take off funds. They are common vocations to empower youth (Oladunjoye and Audu 2012; Olasanmi, Ayoola and Kareem 2012). The following were identified as major categories of both positive and negative impacts of ICT on youths:

Social Interactions

According to an in-depth evaluation of the impact of ICT on youth published in the 2003 World Youth Report prepared by the United Nations, ICT has changed the way young people interact socially, as digital communication has increasingly replaced traditional forms of interaction. ICT offers youth autonomy from families with access to vast virtual social networks that provide more instantly-gratifying, but less personal interactions (see also http://apniwebsitez.blogspot.com/2011/03/impact-of-information-communication.html_br).

Psychological Health

Some researches, including a Swedish study published in a 2007 issue of the Journal of Computers in Human Behaviour, highlights the potential negative impacts of ICT on youths. Such studies tend to conclude that a high quantity of ICT use has a risk factor of developing psychological health challenges among youths.

Education and Empowerment

ICT also offers opportunities for youth empowerment and education, particularly in societies where resources are limited. Researches has shown that the youths in various locations can use ICT to maintain cultures, gain knowledge, develop skills and generate income. According to the 2005 World Youth Report section on youth in civil society, "ICT is increasingly being used to improve access to education and employment opportunities, which supports efforts to eradicate poverty"(see also

http://www.ehow.com/facts_6970207_impact-information-communication-technology-youth.html_br).

Vocational Opportunities in ICT

A vocation can be defined as what an individual practices to earn an income. It can be acquired through proper training either in the vocational schools, apprenticeship with a knowledgeable practitioners, or expression of talents.

In ICT, several areas have been identified over the years as a special means of providing services. These include:

1. Networking;
2. Programming;
3. Repairing and maintenance;
4. Computer sales;
5. Phone sales;
6. Parts and accessory sales;
7. Document processing; and
8. Phone calls, etc.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted in Idah Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. The study group within the area is the youth. The data of the study were collected from the youths in Idah Local Governemnt Area who are involved in the application of ICT. The target population is characterized by variability on the attributes of educational qualification, religion and marital status. This variability is expected to influence their exposure to ICT. A total of 107 respondents were used as the sample size which represent 9% error margin using Yaro Yamani statistical formula.

Study Area

Idah Local Government is on the Eastern Bank of the River Niger, in the middle belt region of Nigeria. Idah Local Government Area of Kogi State which was chosen as the area of study was created in 1976, with a landmass of 39.79 square kilometers. It has a population of 79,815 people based on the 2006 census estimate.

The headquarters of the council is at Idah. The local government was created to bring government closer to the people by rendering cutting edge social services like maintenance of rural roads, provision of portable drinking water, security of lives and property, provision of health care facilities, etc. Today, the local government has grown in line with the demands for expansion.

Measurement of Variables

The dependent variable is the youth and they were examined based on their educational qualification, religion and marital status. The independent variable is ICT facilities which were measured on a well structured questionnaire, which is the research instrument used for the study. The questionnaire was administered in the area and two Field Assistants helped the researchers in the research process. The questionnaires were administered within a period of 21 days.

Table 1: Respondents Highest Educational Qualification

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary school	23	21.5
Secondary school	41	38.3
ND/NCE	27	25.2
HND/BSC	10	9.3
Others	6	5.6
Total	107	100

Source: Field Research (2013)

Most of the respondents are secondary school leavers with a total of 41(38.3%) as shown in Table 1, while 23(21.5%) had primary education, 27(25.2%) had ND/NCE respectively, 10(9.3%) had HND/BSC, while 6(5.6%) possess other educational qualifications.

Table 2: Respondents Religion

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Christianity	64	58.8
Islam	43	40.2
Others	0	0
Total	107	100

Source: Field Research (2013)

Most of the respondents are Christians with a total of 64(58.8%), while 43(40.2%) are of the Islamic religion and none of the respondents belong to any other religion.

Table 3: Respondents Marital Status

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	76	71.0
Married	31	28.9
Divorced	0	0
Widowed	0	0
Total	107	100

Source: Field Research (2013)

Most of the respondents are single with a total of 76(71.0%), while 31(28.9%) are married and none of the respondents is either divorced or widowed.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 4

S/N	Validating Statement	Number of Respondents (N)					No of Res..	Total Score	Mean (X)	Decision
		SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)				
1	ICT will not increase the vocational opportunities of the youth	16	17	14	20	40	107	270	2.52	Rejected
2	ICT will improve the socio-economic wellbeing of the citizens	40	22	15	14	16	107	407	3.80	Accepted
3	Inadequate infrastructures serve as bane to development of ICT in Nigeria	34	27	19	15	12	107	377	3.52	Accepted
4	ICT will not address unemployment problem in Nigeria	18	15	29	22	23	107	304	2.84	Rejected
5	Public private partnership is needed in developing ICT in Nigeria	37	28	21	10	11	107	391	3.65	Accepted
6	There is need for training and enlightenment of citizens	31	35	15	12	14	107	378	3.53	Accepted

Source: Field work, 2013.

Decision Rule: The five point Likert scale was used in making analysis. The ‘agree and disagree’ response patterns were employed, and weights were assigned to responses as shown in Table 4 above. The decision rule was to accept any element with mean score 3.5 above, and reject those with less than 3.5.

Discussion of Result

From the Table 4, item 2, 3, 5 and 6 were accepted because they have mean value of 3.5 above, while item 1 and 4 were rejected because they have mean value below 3.5. Hence, the following were the findings:

- i. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) will increase the vocational opportunities of youths;
- ii. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) will improve the socio-economic wellbeing of the citizens;
- iii. Inadequate infrastructure serve as the bane to development of ICT in Nigeria;
- iv. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) will address the problem of unemployment in Nigeria;
- v. Public Private Partnership (PPP) is needed in developing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Nigeria; and
- vi. There is need for training and enlightenment of citizens in the area of ICT application.

Conclusion

From the empirical evidence and feedback from the respondents, there is congruence of view that Information and Communication Technology is pivotal to the creation of employment opportunities through youth empowerment in particular and citizens in general. Though, it observed that the focus of developing the potentials of youths towards vocational and employment opportunities are

sometime diverted, but these anomalies can be addressed to ensure an egalitarian society for all citizens.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the findings of this research, the following recommendations, which when strictly adhered to would reduce unemployment and improve the economy of Nigeria:

1. The potentials of youths towards development of ICT should be harnessed to improve their horizon and create employment.
2. The nation's infrastructure should be upgraded and the dilapidated ones replaced so as to encourage the use of ICT.
3. The funding of ICT should be encouraged through public private partnership.
4. Teaching of ICT should be included in the school curriculum of both primary and secondary schools so as to get the youth abreast of ICT application at early stage.
5. The current nation's security challenges should be vigorously tackled so as to provide a safe business environment that would encourage both local and foreign investors to invest in ICT and
6. Intensive seminars, conferences and workshops should be mounted by relevant bodies to educate and upgrade the technical skills of youth in the area of ICT.

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