

THE HUMANITIES, COMPUTER AND THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines the Humanities, computer and the information technology in Nigeria as they affect the development or profit the humanities. It addresses the relationship in the nation's development. The concept of humanities, computer and information technology has been attempted. The prospects, challenges and recommendations on the use of computer and information in the fields of humanities in Nigeria are included.

Introduction

According to Oyedepo (1998 p. 27) 'you are what you are by what you know. Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on the integration of the individuals into a sound and effective citizenry. This philosophy is to be geared towards self-realization, national unity as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress (FRN, 1981). The inculcation of the knowledge and skills as well as the attitudes and values on the citizens of a country is vested in the educational system.

In this paper, therefore, an attempt has been made to examine the humanities in connection with computer and information technology how humanities is given top priority attention in the computer and information technology in Nigeria.

Concept of Humanities

According to the Oxford's Advanced Dictionary, the term Humanities refers to the branches of learning concerned with ancient Greek and Latin culture, the arts subjects especially literature, history and philosophy. Similarly, the New Webster's Dictionary of English Language refers to. the Humanities as studies of history, art, literature, classics etc emphasizing the cultural aspect of civilization. The Encyclopedia Britannica states that the Humanities refer to subjects that stress human values and express the spirit of man. It stresses further than in a less definite sense, the word also refers to a branch of knowledge, the aggregate of such disciplines and subject matters in their own right. It contends that the humanities can be identified.

This is popularly referred to as the arts rather than sciences. It is a field of study that focuses attention on man's imagination, creativeness; and in addition to his cultural heritage that show respect for human values. According to Oputa (1988), "the humanities and social sciences have men as the theme.... While sciences deal with matter, objects things that you can touch, discuss, measure... That man can subject to experiment, manipulate and change and he can utilize and command". Thus, having man as their theme expresses a positive direction in the way human beings should be treated. It is in this direction that thought is given to the humanities and social sciences as education for future. The computer is a device or an electronic machine that accepts data processes the data, stores the data, and produces the required result (output) (Draka, 1999).

According to the same author a computer is a machine that can do many things very quickly. He emphasis further that computers need programs and each program makes a computer do something different.

Like any other processing system a computer operation can be considered in terms of:

- i. Input data and program instructions are entered into the computer using appropriate method such as hard keyboard.
- ii. **Storage:-** Data and instructions are held in computer storage either in the CPU or in the parking storage until required for processing.

- iii. **Processing:-** The necessary arithmetical and logical operations are carried out within the CPU.
- iv. **Output:-** The result of process is output in the required medium e.g. the printer,
- v. **Control:-** The processing steps are controlled by the store programme.

Computers are of Two Types, Analogue and Digital

The analogue measures values of continuous variable, physical quantity and Digital computer performs arithmetical and logical function.

Information Technology

The information system has become almost synonymous with computer data processing and indeed many books with management information system in the title turn out to be exclusively' concerned with topics such as systems analysis, file design, and various other technical facets of computer based system (Lucy, 1991).

Kelly in Lucy (1991) described information system technology as the combination of human and computer based resources that result in collection, storage, retrieval, communication and use of data for the purpose of efficient operation, management and business planning.

It is clear therefore from the foregoing that information technology keeps tracks of everything that will assist knowledge effectiveness. The ultimate objective is to gather all the information past and present into storage pool, which could be recalled with ease when needed.

Computer processing technology and other information system have undergone rapid and dramatic changes in the past and are expected to continue to do so, and new technologies will continue to be developed. Experience shows that development changes in technologies have had, and will continue to have tremendous impact on the activities, cost, income, environment viability and profitability in humanities. Information technology has to be relevant and useful to those who need it, as an essential aspect of one's life, for without information no education can take place.

Computer really has become imperative in teaching/learning of Humanities since computers were introduced in the late 1940s, they have been applied in the western world to solve various problems. Their great attributes of reliability, speedy operations, accuracy not being bored, unfearfulness, and untiring processing, large storage capacities have endeared them to the educational sector.

Teachers, students, workers in their schools and colleges find them as worthy tools. In Nigeria, the march has been slow but is catching on. Hence a way of enhancing the individual quality of life and that of the nation along with the goal of self-reliance and balanced personality is to radically master the use of computer and computer technology.

Values of Computer and Information Technology to Humanities

Computing in third-world nation is affected by these widening humanities, technology and information gaps.

While it is true that in many such nations there are people who are well trained in computer and communication technologies that many have learned to program a computer, and that the factors in these fields of endeavor is more important than chips and cables, it is also true that the initial hardware and maintenance cost constitutes a considerable financial burden.

Rapid changes in technology accelerate the process of obsolescence. One must replace in three to four years machine bought when they first came out, and replacement costs are prohibitive. New technologies that have merged with the traditional information technologies, such as optic fiber networks in communications are hard to come by in the beginning because one must first wait until there is someone in the country who can maintain them. As a result of these changes, much valuable information is lost. It is also difficult to keep track of the trends in information technology in the developed nations.

The Hermes program which was launched in July 1986, is present administration's answer to the issues raised by the use of the new technologies.

It is an educational experiment whose results are hard to foresee. The University of Los Andes is Colombia hopes to train humanities in the management of changes.

With the help of strategies planning and to evaluate the transformations brought about by change, careful attention will be paid to the impact that this change may have on the human being. For this reasons, the name of the project was taken from the humanities.

Hermes, son of Zeus was the messenger of the gods in Greek mythology, and by extension was converted into the available god of communications. There are five main goals of the Hermes program. According to Echekwube (1993, Pp. 79-102):

- a. To substantially increase the efficiency and quality of students' work done outside the classroom, particularly in discipline in which information technology has not been used with this purpose. Technological progress has made possible the automatic handling of information in every branch of knowledge. Through use of this technology, students can perform many otherwise repetitive tasks, thus freeing time to devote to other activities, such as the exercise of creativity and personal and emotional development.
- b. To facilitate faculty and researchers in performance of their fundamental mission as educators and sponsors of future professionals through use of innovative methods. As is well known, the way the higher education is being conducted has rapidly changed in institution that have adopted the new technologies. From the simple tutorial systems of the flash card type the computer has made possible the creation of complex simulations and realistic learning environments. Use of multimedia and the study of cognitive science will someday allow the introduction of better techniques in the learning process. For researchers easy access to networks will surely increase their productivity and facilitate their communication with colleagues around the globe.
- c. To give an education in the new information technologies to students, faculty, staff, and researchers at the basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. This means that the whole community must become computer-literate in a relatively short time. With some people using the computer as a productivity tool and others learning programming. The intermediate and advanced levels will be reserved for those whose work calls for intensive use of the computer.
- d. To engage in research projects that deal with certain areas that are very important in information technology, initially, five research areas were identified: definition and development of programming environments in interactive graphic analysis, design, modeling and simulation of systems; interpretation of signals and images, other areas of interest have been added, including parallel processing, robotics and control systems and artificial intelligence, among others.
- e. To improve the administration of the institutions through the use of informational technology.

Relationship Between the Three Components

The discussion above has shown that computer, information technology and Humanities can do without one another in the system in Nigeria today.

The Humanities should be given priority attention in Nigeria especially in the information technology. There is the need, therefore, to examine the concept and values inherent in each of the single disciplines of humanities and how they are related to the computer and information technology. Computer networks have made it possible for teaching and learning processes to be undertaken outside the traditional classroom arrangement in all fields of endeavour. The wide area network can enable resource personnel who may be residing in Lagos to communicate with students in Abuja for instance, it can enable scholars make references to Libraries scattered all over the country. The global network of computer network called Internet is the most revolutionary. There is a host of facilities on the net which would benefit teaching and learning of humanities in the country Nigeria. E.g. Electronic Mail (E-mail), News Groups, File Transfer Protocol (FTP), Internet phones. Today's technology has advanced to the point that you can actually talk using voice across the net. Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) is a suitable facility that can establish voice contact between teachers and students.

History is a repository of human values and aspirations and the accumulation of efforts, experience, hopes and achievements that have gradually civilized humanity (Daniel, 1972 Pp. 113). This could be developed better for computer use.

Language - vocal and written symbols used by human beings to communicate their feelings. In other words, language is a means of conveying ideas, knowledge, information and values. Ayodele (1998) opined that without language, it is doubtful if there can be any meaningful thinking among the members of the homo sapiens.

Language facilitates effective communication. Literature describes the creative and universal means of communicating the emotional, spiritual or intellectual concerns of mankind.

Recommendations/Conclusion

1. Government should begin to develop policies that will encourage research in computer information technology in the country. This will knock down price of computers and accessories.
2. Government can follow the example of other developing countries like Peru by establishing Tele-centres across the country in Universities, schools and colleges. These centres will be used to obtain information from the Internet.
3. The current deregulation of National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) and Nigerian Telecommunications Limited is welcome. It will bring about competition and destroy the monopoly of NITEL, which serves as the gateway to the information super highway.
4. The ministry of information should mount workshops, seminars etc to arise the level of awareness in information technology. Managers of schools and colleges should also make staff training in this field a priority.

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