

APPLICATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN FOSTERING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Information Technology has brought about the existence of Internet. Internet has made the world become a global village and it has contributed to immense development in human society. The paper discussed how Information Technology (Internet) can be used to promote socio-economic development in Nigeria. It is pointed out that Internet can promote development in Nigeria because it serves as a useful technological product for acquisition of education, engaging in communication and involving in business transactions. Some recommendations were made in the paper to encourage the use of Information Technology in Nigeria.

Development is expected to be the major vision and mission of any nation. Development ensures that there is improvement in both the individual and societal standard of living. National Development mainly deals with economic, social and political development.

Nigeria is a developing nation. Having a socio-economic status that is in a good and pleasant state can help Nigeria become a developed nation. Utilization of science and technology is a means of promoting socio-economic well being of people to ensure development. However, an aspect of science and technology needed for development in this modern era is Information Technology. The paper discusses how Information Technology can be used to promote socio-economic development in Nigeria.

Basic Understanding of Information Technology (IT)

Information Technology (IT) involves the use of electronic means in acquiring, storing, processing and distributing information. Two technologies involved in Information Technology are computer technology and telecommunication technology. According to Chijioke (2009), computer technology is essentially for information acquisition, storage and processing; telecommunication technology deals with information distribution.

An essential and prominent part of Information Technology is the Internet. In other words, Information Technology is mainly concerned with Internet services. Internet stands for "International Network" and it is the largest computer network such that each computer in the network can communicate one another from any part of the world, irrespective of the geographical distance (Nwosu, 2006).

Information Technology makes globalization possible. It is rightly pointed out by Inyiama (2004) that Information Technology has transformed the human world into "global village" where people can easily communicate with one another in multimedia electronically, from any point in the globe and the technology affects socio-economic activities. In fact, Information Technology is a system that is dynamic and has great influence in the socio-economic life of man, for it is continually evolving, breaking barriers and defining challengers in the political, social and economic affairs of nations.

Using Information Technology for Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

Internet is a great technology that the human society is becoming increasingly addicted to because of its many advantages. Unfortunately, low productivity in the use of Information Technology (Internet) is one of the technological problems in Nigeria and so there is ineffectiveness in utilization of Internet in the nation (Nwosu, 2006). Inyama (2004) believed that Nigeria is not doing well in the use of Information Technology and so she is not making enough impact towards the evolution of the appropriate learning process for the future: A wide gap exists between the use of Internet in African countries like Nigeria and in the developed world because much of Nigerian population has not experienced the technology (Emenari, 2004). If Nigeria can effectively use the Internet, it can enhance her socio-economic development. This is because Internet can serve as a great means for acquisition of education, Information handling (communication), and business transactions.

Internet provides some facilities for acquisition of education. It is a fact that education is a means of human development. As stated by Nwaogu (1985), "to educate a man means adding to real capital, therefore, increasing his productivity or real income. Hence, education has come to be regarded as an investment in human capital". Nwosu (2004) noted that literacy level in any nation affects her level of national development.

Information Technology through electronic learning (E-learning) provides the avenues and multimedia for promoting appropriate learning process in the 21st century. For instance, a computerized library has important advantages over the conventional library for it is easily accessible, richer in context and cheaper. Internet provides multimedia that

facilitate acquisition of knowledge and skill in a manner that enables students learn and grasp much more easily, even when the subjects are considered difficult using conventional techniques (Inyama, 2004).

Electronic learning enhances distance education. Anigbogu and Umeh (2003) pointed out that E-learning is a technology that makes information available to learners, researchers, and others irrespective of the distance and the technology takes over substantial portions of teachers' roles effectively, leading to cost reduction in instructional delivery.

Modern communication has improved, using Information Technology, such that globalization is possible. For instance, Internet has made communication from any part of the globe possible using electronic mail (E-mail). E-mail provides a fast, economic, convenient means of sending messages to and receiving messages from people across the globe. Other uses of Internet in communication are its application in, facsimile, electronic bulletin board, data base records, file transfer.

The use of Internet for communication is a means of minimizing transportation hazards. People can be in their houses or offices and communicate one another without travelling. Thus, Transportation hazards like congestions and accidents on the road can be reduced in Nigeria.

Internet also has economic value for it can improve business transaction in Nigeria. The use of E-commerce (using the Internet) is a means of improving business activities for it can create global medium that can dismantle distance and boundaries in business transaction. With E-commerce, it is possible to bring together customer, vendors, suppliers and employees on-line.

By engaging in various activities concerned with Internet services, people can get employment opportunities. The employment

opportunities can create entrepreneurship for Nigerian youths who are not yet working. It is an axiom that people work for money to have socio-economic satisfaction. Nwosu (2004) pointed out that employment helps to generate income for a happy and healthy living as well as prevention of idleness that leads to social vices.

For Internet to provide the socio-economic values required, computer crime should be avoided in Nigeria. Computer crime is the use of computer system to commit unauthorized acts. Computer crime can be avoided by people being of good moral conduct. According to Nwosu (2003), "good moral life is a means of societal or national development. A nation known for moral ethics commands respect but it is a shame to the image of a nation with picture of moral decadence".

Conclusion

Information Technology is a vital product of electronic technology for uplifting national development. Internet, as a part of Information technology, is communication super highway that has many advantages for promoting socio-economic development in human society. It is expected that Nigeria should make serious effort in the use of Internet in achieving her socio-economic development. In fact, Internet is a great technology that can bring positive impact in the economic, social and political affairs of Nigeria.

Recommendations

For effective use of Information Technology (Internet) in socio-economic development of Nigeria, the followings are recommended:

1. Government, organizations and individuals should provide materials and resources for encouraging the use of IT in Nigeria.

2. There is need to ensure that institutions and organizations in Nigeria are networked into the Internet for active involvement in globalization needed for socio-economic development.
3. Good moral should be displayed by Nigerians in the use of IT to avoid evil acts that retard development.
4. The general public should be enlightened on the importance of the Internet and they should endeavour to acquire computer literacy.
5. Academic institutions should provide quality education to staff and students on computer and Internet usage.

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