

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY FOR JOB CREATION AND SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

*Angela N. Okolo*

*Department of Office Technology and Management,  
Federal Polytechnic, Oke.*

### **Abstract**

Information and communication technology can be described as a global agenda in information, knowledge, and skills acquisition. It is all about ideas, knowledge and practices that are technologically driven, geared towards global knowledge for progress and development in economic, social, political, health, cultural, educational, and scientific activities. The paper examined information and communication technology for job creation and national development. Information technology has helped in job creation and national development in Nigeria. The national development of every country is evaluated by the quality of education acquired by its citizenry and innovations in technological endeavour. The paper concluded by stressing the fact that ICT education has to be emphasized to bring about the desired result in national development.

### **Introduction**

The concept 'development' can be conceived from different perspectives depending upon the angle one sees it. As a process, it can be viewed as the activities aimed at ensuring the progress of a people in a society, community or nation for better conditions of living. The term development can also be conceived simply as an improvement in the material welfare of a people, that is, the effort to improve the economic well-being or welfare of people in any given society or setting. This is based on the conviction that growth is central to development and when there is continued growth of the social, economic, political and material gains of or for a

people especially when it is not limited to time schedule, development could be said to have taken place or it is being witnessed. It could also be said to be simply the art of improving the society or a nation to enable the citizenry achieve their individual and collective goals and aspirations. However, from the forgoing conception of the term development, it could be said that it is a process, efforts or activities for change designed to enable society, nation, community or a people to take charge of their destinies and realize their full potentials especially through building in them self confidence, pride, respect, access to knowledge, education, experiences, skills, financial and material

resources and assets, socio-cultural and political freedom and information necessary to achieve their individual and collective goals and aspirations. The level of development of a country is dependent on the quality of education of its citizenry.

We are living in an information age. As man moves further into the scientific age, his world is becoming increasingly complex and both his needs for information and the quality of information available continued to expand rapidly. With the rapid changes in technology and the importance of information to our societies, information and communication technology has indeed, become part and parcel of our life and a veritable tool for national development.

#### **Information and Communication Technology Defined**

To Oliver and Chapman (1993), information technology is the technology that supports activities involving the creation, storage, manipulation and communication of information together with their related methods, management and application. The Webster Dictionary (Int. Ed.) (1995) defined information system as the combination of all communication methods (computers, telephones, personal contacts etc.). Information technology is a collection of carefully processed data which gives knowledge while technology is the application of scientific knowledge or the art of using skills in making things or the mastery and utilization of manufacturing and industrial methods. Information technology most especially the

INTERNET has turned the entire world to a global village.

Communication technology consists of both physical devices and softwares that are used to transfer data from one physical location to another. Computer and communication equipment can be connected to networks for handling voice, data, images, sound or even video. The information technology infrastructure provides the foundation or platform, on which the firm can build its specific information system.

Nigeria National Policy on Information Technology (NPIT) (2001) described Information Technology (IT) as the bedrock for national survival. NPIT (2001) referred IT as any equipment that is used in automatic acquisition, storage, manipulation, management, movement, control, switching, interchange transmissions or reception of data or information. In the words of Graynor and Ian (1989), IT includes the use of these technologies (computing, micro-electronics and telecommunication) and how these technologies are used to collect, store, and process and distribute any form of information by electronic means. Information technology is one of the powerful forces that have been causing changes to our life styles. It has been changing everything and will continue to change things in the present century. It is very clear now that the development of information technology is rapidly revolutionizing social, economic and educational aspects of our country Nigeria.

O'Brien (2002) saw ICT as any computer-based equipment that people use

to work with information and support information processing needs of an organisation. Clark (2002) defined communication as being manufactured in nature, so it has not been easy to have a universally applicable definition. Communication can be viewed as a transactional process where people construct meaning and develop expectations about what is happening around them through the exchange of symbols. From the above definitions, one can depict that information and communication technology is indispensable in the job creation and national development of our country Nigeria.

### **Information Technology and Job Creation**

Information technology refers to all the inventions in science that are used in handling information, including machine and procedures. Omilegan (2001) stated that information technology is that technology which supports activities involving creation, storage, manipulation and communication of information along with their related method, management and applications. The major component within it is data processing. Obiora (2001) stated that information technology is the harnessing of economic technology for information processing needs of business organisations. From the technical point of view, information system can be defined according to Laudon and Laudon (2002) as a set of interrelated components that collect or retrieve, process, store and distribute information to support decision-

making, coordination and control. Information systems may also help managers and workers to analyze problems, visualize complex subjects and create new products. At the heart of today's globalization is the ease with which information moves around the world providing opportunities for ideas, and innovation as a result of information and communication technology.

Job creation is the ability of the government and individuals to make jobs available to its citizenry. Unemployment rate in Nigeria was on the increase as the World Bank Report stated that at least 50 per cent of graduates in Nigeria were unemployed. An agricultural economist and the Deputy Director of Africa leadership forum, Dr Olumide Ajayi, says it is high time the Nigeria government create the enabling environment that will ensure that business provide jobs. The government must play its role as enabler and regulator through the creation of a sound policy environment. Now if the environment is harsh and not encouraging, activities of the business of the business sector will slow down and the first casualty is jobs. Information and communication technology has the potential of creating jobs for our graduates in various sectors of the economy.

Graduates of information and communication technology can employ the skills acquired in setting up business centers thereby becoming employers of labour. The government has not paid adequate attention to ICT, resulting in the inability of the sector to create jobs. In this era of globalization, ICT has a vital role in

crating jobs for our youths if the awareness and conducive environment is provided both at training institutions and business organisations.

### **Education for Sustainable National Development**

National development in a vast country like Nigeria with a diversity of ethnic groups, differing culture, traditions and religion entails the promotion of political stability, ethnic harmony, natural integration and religious tolerance. It simultaneously involves the speedy advancement of economic and social development (Ayida, 1981). No nation has developed without a sound educational base. Development is said to be felt in a society, community or nation when it is sustained. Similarly, development is said to be sustained when a people manage their socio-economic, political and cultural advances as well as the environment wisely without prejudice to the needs and wants of the future generations. In effect therefore, it could be said that sustainable development can be or is conceived within the context of growth, advancement, conservation and preservation of the gains of development for the benefit of the present and the future (posterity).

The role of ICT as a tool for national development cannot be over emphasized. Education whether formal or informal, conventional or indigenous is vital for sustainable development of people, society, community and the nation. The quality of every nation depends on the quality of education given to and received by its citizens especially in the skill

acquisition programme. Education is the foundation of a virile nation.

The philosophy of education is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal educational opportunities and information access for all citizens of a society, community and the nation at all levels of educational systems. Information and communication technology is a type of education which could impact positively to sustainable national development. It should be a programme designed to prepare the beneficiaries for occupational fields and effective participation in work environment either at private or public levels. Vocational education is another aspect of education that can compliment ICT in job creation and sustainable national development. According to Yakubu (2006), quality Technical and Vocational education and Training would help develop the individual's knowledge of science and technology in a broad occupational area, requiring technical and professional competencies and specific occupational skills. This implies that a developing country like Nigeria, its educational policy should emphasis optimal use of ICT to meet the country's manpower needs necessary for sustainable national development. The effective use of ICTs will enable university and polytechnic graduates to be on their own rather than to be over dependent on blue or white collar jobs.

### **Impact of Information Technology on National Development**

There is no doubt that information technology has contributed positively toward national development. Information is the driving force of every socio-economic, political and physical advancement of every nation. International networking otherwise known as Internet is a major ICT has improved research in education and linking of people in different countries for exchange of thoughts and ideas which enhances development. Internet is like a giant highway that connects one to millions of other users and organisation. It is also a system which connects computer systems located throughout the world that are willing to share resources. The Internet has created a cooperative society that forms a virtual community stretching from one end of the globe to another (Akinyemi, 2003). Lawal (2001) described Internet as a vast information super highway that facilitates communication between computer users both nationally and internationally and enables them communicate directly as if they were part of a giant global computing machines. Through Internet, users share information, transfer files, sends messages and utilize other facilities. Aliyu (2005) described Internet as interconnected spider web that enable millions of people from around the world to download millions of files consisting of reports, research results, graphics, send and receive information around the world within a second. Information and communication technology has contributed immensely to

productivity, thus making accessibility of information easy for quick decision-making. Information and communication technology has done the following towards national development:

- ❖ Information technology according to Oketunyi (2000) provides opportunities for full organizational restructure such as, enhanced user satisfaction, cost effectiveness, integration, faster and simpler programmes, rapid response and easier operational procedures.
- ❖ The application of information technology in areas such as business transaction, data processing, decision support systems, executive information system, office automation, telecommunication and distribution has led to increased efficiency and productivity. Technological advancement has enabled man to perform tasks with decreased manual efforts.
- ❖ Musa (2003) stated that information technology has succeeded in satisfying the thirst of business for better and more efficient operations, effective management and control toward competitive advantage.
- ❖ Information technology has brought about freedom to receive information and the freedom to inform.
- ❖ Information technology facilities such as computers enable organisations store, retrieve documents needed in offices for better decision making.
- ❖ The introduction of automation into the world of business has created jobs

to individuals and this in turn, brings about national development.

In summary, information and communication technology has influenced the following aspects of human endeavour:

- Education
- Economic
- Social

### **Problems of Information and Communication Technology**

There are some problems which must be urgently addressed/solved for information and communication technology to be sustained in order to play effective role in national development.

They include:

- ❖ Absence of high skilled information technologists to put IT innovation into practice.
- ❖ Negative use of IT to dupe people in foreign countries.
- ❖ Limited library resources.
- ❖ High cost of purchase and maintenance of IT equipment.
- ❖ IT not being introduced in every aspect of educational activities.
- ❖ Poor power supply.

### **Conclusion**

There is no doubt in the fact that every society, community and nation aspires to grow and advance in all fronts of human endeavours. Similarly, the extent to which a society, community and nation has developed and sustained its developmental growth is a function of the type, quality and level of education its citizenry have obtained. There is need to provide educational opportunities

especially in the area of information and communication technology. It is widely said that information rules the world, quality information could only be obtained using ICT. It has been noted that ICT is a veritable tool for job creation which will in turn, bring about national development.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the discourse the following recommendations are being made:

- Enough proportion of financial resources should be allocated to the adoption and use of IT in educational sector.
- Graduates of ICT should be empowered with necessary facilities for them to be self employed.
- Education in Nigeria should gear towards employable skills for job creation and national development.
- Public policies should create enabling environment for organisations to create jobs for our graduates
- Libraries have to be equipped if we are to join other countries that are connected to the Internet.

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