ALLEVIATING POVERTY AMONG NIGERIA YOUTH THROUGH ICT
A CASE STUDY OF AKURE ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Poverty level continues to increase in Nigeria as a result of unemployment; Many of our youth are working aimlessly about after graduating from Higher Institutions, the government of Nigeria could not find any lasting solution to this hydra headed problem, as various policies made by it end in futility. This study aim at examining how ICT could be used to solve the problem of unemployment to a reasonable extent, thereby reducing the poverty level. Data were gathered through one hundred questionnaires which was randomly administered among youth in Akure, Ondo state; ninety questionnaires were returned and analysed using percentage frequency table, and the research uncover that majority of our youth has developed the spirit of entrepreneurship and were gainfully self-employed in different sectors in ICT; thereby able to put food on their tables and meet their basic needs without constituting nuisance to the society, thus there is drastically reduction in poverty level

Keywords: Poverty, Unemployment, ICT, Youth

Introduction
ICT are socio-technical systems that blend machines, knowledge, organisation and people. It comprises the hardware, software, network and communication structure, data structure and information, together with control and access levels for different users interface, operating procedures and organisational arrangement and policies for their use. T. Lucey (2005) Information and communication technologies are means of producing information and communicating it; they are good at rapid and accurate calculations, manipulation, storage, retrieval and communication. ICT can assist an organisation with its data storage and processing, with the flows of information in and around the organisation, in the control and management of the
organisation and in establishing internal links between different parts of the organisation and external links with business partners, customers and suppliers.

ICT has enable people to carry out tasks not previously possible, the usage of the internet and World Wide Web (www) facilitate communication and accessing remote information from worldwide source and hence remove the constraints of time and distance. It assists humans being in analysing complex information.

It has also enhances the effectiveness of managers by providing effective information for management, business coordination, control, decision making and strategic planning. It enhances organisational communication through email, video conferencing and chat room facilities on the internet. ICT should be considered as a key to propelling countries towards economic growth.

Poverty

Poverty is the inability to attain a minimum standard of living; it suggests insufficient or total lack of basic necessities like food, housing and medical care. It denotes absence of resources and opportunities that are most basic to human survival, which is manifested in inadequate income, wide spread hunger, gender inequalities, environmental degradation and low access to portable water and sanitation. In absolute terms, poverty suggests insufficient or total lack of basic necessities like food, housing and medical care.

Mc Namara (2003) in Isife B.I et al (2013) described the poor as those who lack not only material and financial resources but also the opportunities to convert the resources they possess (labour, skills /experience and physical resources) in value creating activities, thereby generating income or producing other resources valuable to their peculiar livelihood. The poor suffer from material deprivation as well as low level of education and health. They are powerless, they have limited ability to make choices and live the life they value.

According to World Bank report (2002), poverty is the inability to attain a minimum standard of living; the reports constructed some indices based on a minimum level of consumption in order to show the practical aspect of poverty which include lack of access to resources, lack of education and skills, poor health, malnutrition, lack of political freedom and voice, lack of shelter, poor access to water and sanitation, vulnerability to shocks, violence and crime, political discrimination and marginalization. Similarly, the United Nations human development (UNHD) has introduced the use of indices such as life expectancy, infant mortality rate, primary school enrolment ratio and number of persons per physical to measure poverty in a country. It went on to analyse the fact that poverty has been seen as a dynamic process rather than a static phenomenon, one that captures the various forms of deprivation in well-being. It implies an observable disadvantaged in relation to the local community or the wider society or nation to which a deprived individual, family, household or groups belongs.

The poverty situation in Nigeria is disturbing. It is a social problem in which a country is faced with cultural, social, political, economic and environmental deprivations. In other words, it is a state of involuntary deprivation to which a person, household, community or nation can be subjected. Some school of thought believed that bad governance, corruption, low productivity, debt-burden and conflicts are the causes of poverty. Others attributed the high level of poverty to macro-economic distortion, globalization, high population growth rate and poor human resources development.

Gravity of poverty in Nigeria

Nigeria is blessed with mineral resources and rich in crude oil. Ironically, the citizens are hungry and poor in abundance of plenty. Evidences showed that poverty has been a serious problem confronting the Nigeria nation since independence, Nigeria instead of advancing has lately
degenerated into one of the poorest countries of the world. It was no surprise therefore that majority of the nation’s citizen go to bed hungry every night. Over 5 million Nigerian youths are estimated to be unemployed; In fact, in the heat of the on-going economic depression, many workers were retrenched in both the public and private sectors. In the absence of any national security system to cater for jobless persons, people resort to crime. In similar vein, over 7 million primary age school children are out of school. More pathetic is the disclosure that 15% of Nigerian children stand the risk of dying before the age 5. Women, of course are not spared of the unsettling development, many of them lose their life during child birth. The rising incidence of prostitution is an index of the escalating poverty level in the land. Also compounding the shock is that an estimated 4.4 Million Nigerians are living with HIV/AIDS. Recent statistics indicates that youth constitute more than half of the world population, there are about 1.8 billion young people in the world today; and half of them survive on less than $2 a day, while more than 100 million adolescent do not attend school; 16 million adolescent girls become mother every year. Almost 40 per cent of the 6800 new HIV infections each day are among young people, unemployment has been one of the major causes of poverty in our country Nigeria. 

(www.unfpa.org/public/adolescents)

**Unemployment**

Unemployment is the state of not having a job which often results into poverty. It has been a major problem yet to be solved in a developing country especially Nigeria, several government have made effort by establishing different policies in order to solve this problem yet the rate of unemployment among our teeming youth is increasing every day. It occurs when people are without work or actively seeking work. The unemployment rate is a measure of the prevalence of unemployment and it is calculated as a percentage by dividing the number of unemployed individuals by all individual currently in the labour force. During periods of recession, an economy usually experiences a relatively high unemployment rate.

**Types of unemployment**

Voluntary and involuntary unemployment are two types common in Nigeria; Voluntary is attributed to individual decisions, whereas involuntary unemployment exist because of social-economic environment including the market structure, government intervention and level of aggregate demand in which individual operate. Examples of voluntary unemployment are workers rejecting low wage jobs whereas involuntary unemployment includes workers fired due to an economic crisis, industrial decline, company bankruptcy or organisational restructuring. In practice, the distinction between voluntary and involuntary unemployment is hard to draw. The clearest cases of involuntary unemployment are those where there are fewer job vacancies than unemployed workers even when wages are allowed to adjust, so that even if all vacancies were to be filled, some unemployed workers would still remain. International labour organisation defined unemployed workers as those who are currently not working but are willing and able to work for pay, currently available for work, and have actively searched for work (www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/unemployment)

**Contribution of ICT in poverty alleviation**

The usage of ICT has greatly reduced the poverty level in Nigeria. It has served as a medium through which information is being disseminated to the masses, it has enhanced people daily living by increasing access to information relevant to their economic livelihood, healthcare, transport, distance learning or in strengthening kinship. Mobile phones are increasingly available which help to overcome rural isolation and facilitate easy communication. The wireless technologies have entered into the remote area thereby reducing the
reliance on costly fixed telephone infrastructure. With the establishment of rural information and business centres in most parts of the country, many youth has been employed as information managers, system analyst, etc.

ICT has presented the developing world with employment opportunities for youth in form of outsourcing services to firms in the developing world as it is economical than hiring in-house employees. Apparently, it would be costly to hire employees and pay them monthly remuneration plus benefits such as travelling allowances, medical cover and retirement benefits than outsource those services to offshore firms where there is low cost of production and cheap labour.

Entrepreneurial opportunities include selling products and services online as well as working for offshore companies from home, these services may include data entry, transcription and taking surveys. On the other hands youths can sell goods from their online stores and accepts payments via recognized global payments solution providers such as master cards, Visa and PayPal; they can also set up affiliate accounts or become resellers and promote products on their websites while earning commission from sales. Youths can also explore opportunities that are not necessarily online oriented such as mobile payments solution in the vast mobile telephony industry.

Challenges of ICT in Nigeria

Major challenges faced by ICT in Nigeria are listed below:
- Inadequate communication and power infrastructure
- Shortages of ICT facilities and skills
- Inadequate institutional arrangement
- Limited financial resources
- Inadequate public private partnership
- Limited data management capacity
- Inadequate bandwidth nationality on the gateway.

Methodology

This research was carried out in Akure, ondo state where a big building popularly called Olukayode house was devoted for ICT business with teeming youth making their daily living through it. The primary data were generated through the use of questionnaires; one hundred questionnaires (100) were randomly distributed to shop owners, individual and entrepreneurs who are engaged in IT business in all formations; out of which ninety (90) were returned and analysed using percentage frequency.

Findings

Majority of the respondent were graduate from various disciplines who resulted into ICT business after fruitless search for white collar job, some of my respondents started small but have grown big to become employers of labour.

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<tr>
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<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42.8</td>
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This study reveal that both male and female are into ICT business, 57.8 % of my respondent were male while 42.8 % were female. It shows that both sex benefit from the ICT because they were gainfully self-employed not minding the gender bias, thus reducing the poverty level.
Table 2 - Sectorial participants in ICT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing computer and its accessories</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing phones and its accessories</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downloading of music, installation of software’s</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cybercafé operators</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware maintenance</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer training, business centres e.g. photocopying, scanning, typing and setting etc.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making phones calls and selling recharge cards</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
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16.7% of my respondents are into buying and selling of computer and its accessories, printers, photocopier etc., 15.6% are into buying and selling of phones and its accessories, 14.4% engaged themselves gainfully into downloading of music, installation of software etc., 12.2% are operating cybercafé, 20% are into training of computer applications, 10% are into hardware maintenance and 11.1% are into printing and selling of recharge cards and making of calls.

I discovered that nearly all of them are self-financing i.e. their source of capital was raised personally either from family members or loan from friends, most of my respondents resulted into their various line of business after fruitless search for paid job, and they have no access to either bank loan or government loan to finance them.

Since it is crystal clear that IT to some extent has helped to solve unemployment problem; it is pertinent that government should paid cogent attention to this area by rendering assistance and encouraging our youth to take advantage of the new discovery in information technology and empower them.

Suggestions for further improvement

- The government can come in by giving soft loan to these youth without much protocol.
- Our government can also encourage private-public partnership
- The business environment in which the business operates should be made friendlier by formulating favourable policies and regulations.
There should be intense creations of awareness of the opportunities made available by the IT especially in the rural areas.

References


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http://[go.worldbank.org](http://go.worldbank.org)