ACQUISITION OF ICT SKILLS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN OGUN STATE

Adebayo, Aminat A. & Oderinde, Oluwafemi A.
The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro

ABSTRACT

ICT skills are learned abilities used for the operation of ICT gadgets. This forms one of the fastest expanding skill-sets and is currently in high demand across multiple markets. More than just as an industry of its own, ICT has also permeated into different job functions, evolving from being a specified niche to becoming a basic requirement across different fields. This study therefore examined the impact of acquisition of ICT skills on the economic development in Ogun State. The population used for the study comprised of one hundred and sixty ICT operators, students and ICT administrators in the Three Senatorial District Areas of Ogun State: Ilaro, Itori and Sapade. One hundred respondents were selected through purposive sampling techniques. For the study, three research questions were raised and twelve questionnaire related items were formulated to make a structured questionnaire. One hundred copies of the structured instrument were produced and administered on the One hundred respondents. Acquisition of ICT skills such as computer is a veritable tool for economic development. It was recommended among others that the government should create enabling environment in order to boost citizens' interest in acquisition of ICT skills towards sustaining the economic growth and development of Nigeria.

Keywords: **Acquisition, ICT skills, Opportunities, Economic development and Nation.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The role being played by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in economic growth and development of any nation cannot be overemphasized. A nation like Nigeria as one of the developing countries of the world has started to look at ICT as magic bullet to solve her developmental problems. A recent 2007 publication of the Africa Capacity Building foundation asserted that the level of interest in technology solutions to critical development challenges is high in Africa, which raises a need to accelerate the penetration and application of technology on the continent, particularly in the public sector.

In today's business world, ICT skills are one of the fastest expanding skill-sets and are currently in high demand across multiple markets (Kenny, 2002). More than just as an industry of its own, ICT has also permeated into different job functions, evolving from being a specified niche to becoming a basic requirement across different fields. Such skills are also necessary for students entering into the working-world; however, it appears that many may have a misperception of their actual digital proficiency, vastly overestimating their skills against the actual reality of their performance. This gap is critical and it is up to Educational Institutions to address this by implementing more of such ICT skill-sets into their curriculum (Dymond & Oestmann, 2002).

Khasiani (2000) examined some ICT skills needed for promoting economic development of a nation which include: computer skills, analytical skills, interpersonal skills, manipulative skills, application skills, programming skills, software and hardware skills and so on, which are used to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the internet.

In the context of learning, especially in areas of socio-educational vulnerability, ICT can be an important tool to guarantee quality, relevance and equity in the level of educational achievement. ICTs have the potential to democratize access to knowledge and to develop meaningful learning experiences using the educational material available in them. According to Pedro (2006), the new generations demand a greater use of technologies to achieve economic success of a nation. The Internet, for example, based exclusively on written text and used in a non-sporadic way, would provide job opportunities to citizens of a nation.

Furthermore, the link between economic growth and ICT has been well established (Jalava & Pohjola, 2002, Kraemer & Dedrick, 2001). The exact processes of how ICT can be used for poverty reduction in developing countries need

exploration and are open to challenge (Kenny, 2002). ICT as enabler in the development process and in poverty reduction has or makes use of two approaches – ICT as a tool to promote economic growth (ICT-driven approach) and ICT as support of economic development.

In the ICT-driven approach, often underpinned by the assumption that better information improves how economic resources are allocated, one tries to empower the poor in the rural and urban areas by intervening to correct issues such as scarce, poor, inefficient, and untimely information by providing village knowledge centers. In this approach ICT can also be used to enhance health, education, social capital, etc. The other approach of using ICT in support of development first identifies the development goal (e.g., health care provision, increased agricultural yield, etc.), works out what the ICT needs of the target group are and then looks at how ICT and other media can play a role in providing and easing channels of communication. In using ICT to support development, the role of the poor in the identification of their information needs is greatly stressed, (Heeks, 2002).

Ouagadougou (2015) identifies the importance of ICT to promote sustainable economic development, poverty alleviation and the enhancement of the quality of life for a nation in which the need of ICT skills is required for application and achievement of technological goals. ICT skills can assist in improving efficiency and effectiveness of public sector institutions by creating the enabling environment for the economy to increase her competitiveness, (Cristia, Ibarraran, Cueto, Santiago & Severin, 2012; Torres & Padilla, 2015).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Lack of ICT skills; the bane of economic development is a deterrent for people to use the ICT gadgets. This constitutes a major constraint for people to go online. Today, online activities get complex, fewer people are undertaking these activities. This pointed out the importance of ICT skills for individuals in the society, employment and general well being. Computer users in developed countries have more ICT skills than those in developing countries which prevent people in those countries from using the internet. The cost of acquiring ICT gadget as one of the major factors discouraging people in developing countries from using the equipment aside from the lack of fundamental ICT skills.

ICT skills are fundamental to achieving positive while also avoiding negative results. Transferable ICT skills are indispensable in the face of increasing complexity of ICT system. Hence, the skills to use ICT are fundamental to participate in an increasing ICT world. This study therefore examined how ICT skills could be used as a veritable tool for economic development.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine how acquisition of ICT skills can serve as a veritable tool for economic development in Ogun State. The specific objectives are:

- To identify the available ICT skills needed to acquire for economic development in Ogun State
- To determine how the acquisition of ICT skills would impact the lives of people in Ogun State
- To identify an extent to which ICT could be used to sustain economic development of Ogun State.

The following research questions were raised on the study

- What are the available ICT skills needed to acquire for economic development in Ogun State?
- How would the acquisition of these ICT skills impact the lives of people in Ogun State?
- To what extent would ICT be used to sustain economic development of Ogun State?

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was a survey and carried out in Ogun State. The population used for the study comprised of one hundred and sixty ICT operators, students and ICT administrators in the Three Senatorial District Areas of Ogun State: Ilaro, Itori and Sapade. A total number of one hundred (100) respondents were purposively sampled. Questionnaire was the main instrument used to gather data for the study. The instrument was validated by knowledge-based workers. The instrument consisted of twelve items seeking information on the acquisition of ICT skills for economic

development in Ogun State. Respondents were asked to choose one out of the four options (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree) provided for each item of the questionnaire.

For the purpose of analysis, values were assigned to the four options provided in the instrument as follows: Strongly Agree = 4 marks, Agree = 3 marks, Disagree = 2 Marks and Strongly Disagree = 1 mark respectively. Mean method was used to analyse the data collected. One hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered on the selected respondents used for the study. However, all the copies of questionnaire administered were returned. A minimum of 2.5 score was set as standard for acceptability; any score below the set standard was rejected.

3. RESULTS

Table 1: **Mean rating of the respondents' responses on the available ICT skills needed to acquire for economic development.**

S/No	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
1.	Computer skill is needed.	68	25	5	2	3.59	Upheld
2.	Application skill is required.	83	12	4	1	3.85	Upheld
3.	Programming skill is also needed.	90	8	1	1	3.87	Upheld
4.	Analytical skill is also required.	88	10	2	-	3.86	Upheld

Field Survey, 2019

Data collected and analysed in table one above showed that all the items raised were considered by the respondents as available ICT skills needed to acquire for economic development in Nigeria. This can be deduced from the mean score of the above respondents in all the items raised which was more than 2.5.

Table 2: Mean rating of the respondents' responses on how the acquisition of ICT skills would impact the lives of Nigerians.

S/No.	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
5.	It makes citizens to be Self-reliance.	79	20	1	-	3.78	Upheld
6.	It makes citizens to meet-up with the world standard technologically.	85	12	1	2	3.78	Upheld
7.	It enhances job opportunities of citizens.	77	22	-	1	3.75	Upheld
8.	It creates avenue for citizens to grow and develop their capacity.	90	5	2	3	3.82	Upheld

Field Survey, 2019

Data collected and analysed in table two above showed that all the items raised were considered by the respondents as how the acquisition of ICT skills would impact the lives of Nigerians. This can be deduced from the mean score of the above respondents in all the items raised which was more than 2.5.

Table 3: Mean rating of the respondents' responses on the extent to which ICT could be used to sustain economic development of Nigeria.

S/No.	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
9.	It helps to provide employment in the country.	85	17	2	1	3.96	Upheld
10.	It helps to reduce corruption of public office holders in the system.	67	30	1	2	3.62	Upheld
11.	It helps to solve insecurity challenges experienced in the world especially in Nigeria.	86	12	-	2	3.82	Upheld
12.	It enhances close relationship between the government and the citizens in terms of governance.	90	7	1	2	3.85	Upheld

Field Survey, 2019

Data collected and analysed in table three above showed that all the items raised were considered by the respondents as the extent to which ICT could be used to sustain economic development of Nigeria. This can be deduces from the mean score of the above respondents in all the items raised which was more than 2.5.

4. DISCUSSION

Research question one was used to determine the available ICT skills to acquire towards economic develop of Nigeria. From the data collected and analysed, it was discovered that there are a lots of ICT skills available to citizens of Nigeria for economic development. This was evident in the responses of the respondents to all the items raised on this research question. There is no doubt that computer skill, analytical skill, programming skill, software and hardware skills, manipulative skills and application skills form some of the needed ICT abilities to sustain economic development of a country, (Khasiani, 2000).

Research question two was raised to determine how ICT skills acquired would impact the lives of Nigerians. From the responses of the respondents which were analysed, it was clearly shown that the acquisition of ICT skills by citizens would make them to be self-reliance by providing opportunities for themselves in the technological world of ICT, make them to meet-up with the world standard, technologically, enhance their job opportunities to be ICT facilitators to the government and students and create opportunity for them to grow and develop their capacity towards sustaining economic development of Nigeria, (Heeks, 2002).

Research question three was used to investigate the extent at which ICT could be used for sustaining economic development of Nigeria. From the data collected and analysed, it was discovered that there are a lot of opportunities a country can benefit from the use of ICT for job creation for the citizens of the country, reduce corrupt practices of public holders from the system, useful in solving insecurity challenges in the country and aid close relationship existing between the government and the people in fostering effective communication, (Torres & Padilla, 2015).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

ICT skills have the potential tendency to improve the quality and relevance of ICT and economic development of a nation, but their real impact will depend on the technological competencies installed in the citizens and the pedagogical intentionality that is systematically derived from it. Along with the use of communicative leisure, a less rudimentary technological appropriation and educational function is required, a particularly relevant challenge in the most vulnerable contexts.

The importance of ICT skills is to promote sustainable development, poverty alleviation and the enhancement of the quality of life for a nation in which the need of ICT skills is required for application and achievement of technological goals. ICT skills assist in improving efficiency and effectiveness of public sector institutions by creating the enabling environment for the economy to increase her competitiveness among other countries of the world.

5.2 Recommendations

From the results and findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Government should create enabling environment for ICT to have it stand in the country to encourage citizens to acquire ICT skills.
- Teaching of ICT skills should be incorporated into the curricula of Educational Institutions in Nigeria.
- Citizens should develop their ICT skills for self-reliance.
- Government subsidy to reduce the cost of acquiring ICT equipment.
- Manpower Training on the maintenance of ICT equipment.

REFERENCES

Dymond, A. & Oestmann, S. (2002). ICTs, poverty alleviation and universal access: Review of status and issues,

ATPS Special Paper Series, (9), Nairobi: Kenya African Technology Policy Studies Network, http://www.atpsnet.org/.

Heeks, R. (2002). I-development not e-development: Special issue on ICTS and development. *Journal of International Development*, 14(1), 1-12.

Jalava, I. & Pohjola, M. (2002). Economic growth in the new economy: Evidence from advanced economies. *Information Economics and Policy*, 14(2), 189–210.

Kayani, R. & Dymond, A. (2002). Options for rural telecommunications development, World Bank Technical Paper, (359)http://www.inteleconresearch.com/pages/wbank.html.

Kenny, C. (2002). Information and communication technologies for direct poverty alleviation: costs and benefits. *Development Policy Review*, 20, 141–157.

Khasiani, S.A. et al. (2000). Enhancing women's participation in governance: The case of Gender and the Information Revolution in Africa, Ottawa: International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Chapter 8. http://www.idrc.ca/books/focus/903/11-chp08.html.

Torres U. et al (2015). *Information technology and productivity: results and policy implications of cross-country studies*. In Pohjola, M.(Ed), Information technology, productivity, and economic growth, (pp.257-279). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pedro, F. (2006). A diagnosis of the situation of teachers in Spain from a comparative Perspective. *Revista de Educación* (340), 243-264.