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Wealth Creation and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria: The Role of Information Technology (IT) *(Pp. 212-222)*

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Abstract

The study investigated the Role of Information Technology (IT) in the creation of wealth and poverty alleviation in Nigeria. The design of the study was a descriptive survey, carried out at Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe in Anambra State of Nigeria. One hundred and ninety three (193) respondents formed the sample population. Questionnaire was used for the collection of data. Mean standard deviation and analysis of variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance was used for data analysis. The findings revealed that Information Technology (IT) is very imperative in the creation of wealth and poverty reduction in Nigeria. Recommendations were also made which include provision of capacity building, solar power and creation of awareness among the communities on the use of Information Technology (IT), etc.

Introduction

The acronym IT (Information Technology) is fast becoming domestic component of every society. IT has grown to become a subject of great importance and concern to humanity. It is a rapidly consolidating global network and international trade with multiplier effect in all segments of the world economy.

The role of Information Technology (IT) to make a difference in the lives of people globally is a fact that has come to be accepted by all with development and innovation going hand in hand and knowledge becoming one of the most important factors in determining the standard of living of people everywhere in Nigeria. According to IT news Africa, most advanced economies and companies employ the knowledge card as tool to drive development. There is a common belief that no individual can develop beyond what he or she knows. Information made cheaply and widely available is a veritable tool to break loose from the shackles of poverty. IT can provide a palatable ground for generation, adoption, and exploitation of knowledge to create wealth and elicit people's creativity potentials inhibited in them. IT systems can carry information about investment opportunities, jobs and goods and services.

Information Technology (IT), according to the Dictionary of Information Technology (1995) is defined as equipment and methods used to handle information which involves information collection, processing, storage and usage. Also, IT is the term used to describe all computers, telecommunication and related technology that are concerned with the handling or transfer of information. It is a vast field incorporating the collection, handling and communication of information (Dictionary of Computing and Communications, 2007).

In this regard, IT can broadly be defined as the acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination of vocal, textual, pictorial and numerical information by a micro electronic based combination of computer and telecommunication.

The meeting of the delegates on IT in the global village in November, 1998 pointed out "that the developing countries are caught in a cycle of poverty which they can only break with effective platform for using sophisticated technology to provide solutions to people's problems everywhere especially in the face of alleviating poverty faced by majority of people in our country, Nigeria today. Its realization aids in the transformation of individual, society or country from financial and economic obscurity to financial and economic independence. In other words, IT is seen as a tool for wealth creation".

People's perceptions about the definition of wealth differ based on their needs and desires. From encyclopedia, wealth means "well being" or "welfare". It has come to mean an abundance of items of economic value or the state of controlling or possessing such items and encompassing money,

real estate and personal property. Wealth also refers to some accumulation of resources, whether abundant or not and does not exist in a vacuum or infinite volume, it has to be created (Newaman and Chanarbghi; 1997).

In many countries, wealth is also measured by reference to access to essential services such a health care or possession of crops and livestock. Today, in community, wealth creation with information technology has ballooned to encompass many aspects of computing and technology, and the term is more recognizable that ever before.

Wealth is the direct opposite of poverty. Poverty, according to the central Bank of Nigeria (2003) is a state in which an individual (i) is not able to care adequately for his or her basic needs of food, clothing and shelter (ii) is unable to obtain adequate income, find stable job, acquire property or maintain healthy living conditions. The World Bank Report (2008) goes beyond the view of income level, in its definition; poverty includes powerlessness, voicelessness, vulnerability and fear. It should also include as the deprivation of basic capabilities and lack of access to education, health, national resources, employment, land and credit, political participation, services and infrastructure. In a broader definition, poverty is seen as being deprived of the information needed to participate in wider society at local, national and global levels (Harris, 2002).

In Nigeria, poverty is found among the small farmers, rural and urban dwellers, underemployed and unemployed. The need to reduce poverty to the barest minimum has been the major target of the world over as a result of the negative implication of poverty. Poverty is dehumanizing and poses a serious threat to economy, social and political stability and endangers global environmental health. In the developing country like Nigeria, a lot of strategies have been introduced to alleviate poverty. These strategies include; creating of more skilled workers, access to market information, village pay phones, providing basic services, operation feed the nation (OFN), National directorate of employment (NDE) and National association of poverty eradication programme (NAPEP).

Hence, this paper is an attempt to discover how IT empowerment can be used to create wealth and reduce poverty to our youths, rural and urban dwellers.

Statement of the Problem

One of the irritating and chronic problems facing Nigeria's economy is the incessant increase of youth unemployment. Unemployment in Nigeria has

reached crisis level and is a major cause of absolute poverty. According to Arizona (2008), the federal office of statistics (FOS) posited that poverty incidence in Nigeria in 1960 was about 15%. This grew to 28% in 1980 and 46% in 1985. By 1996, the poverty incidence was estimated to about 66% in a population of about 110 million. This situation is disturbing because of the little concern of the government of this country. When one considers the thousands of youths that graduate from the tertiary institutions every year one wonders if the government really has serious plans for checking these problems. These problems of unemployment and poverty which are very much correlated expose the youths to some vices such as armed robbery, drug trafficking, prostitution, kidnapping, assassination, etc. It also leads to loss of social, peace, security and orderliness in Nigeria.

Despite the fact that Nigeria is the 6th largest country in the production of crude oil in the world today, more than 70% of the country's population live in poverty. The world development report shows that many Nigerians live on less than one United States Dollar ($1.00) a day (Arizona, 2008).

The escalation of youth unemployment in Nigeria has continued to exacerbate the poverty situation of the country. No government has left without leaving behind one form of poverty alleviation programme or the other, in other to curb poverty and unemployment. This situation challenges us to develop a realistic and appropriate tool to combat poverty. Information Technology (IT) is hereby x-rayed in this paper to discover its use in creating wealth and reducing poverty in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the use of Information Technology (IT) as a tool for wealth creation and poverty alleviation in Nigeria. Specifically, it sought to;

(i)   Determine if the use of IT strategy can contribute to wealth creation.

(ii)   Discover if IT helps in poverty alleviation.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

i.   To what extent does IT empowerment contribute poverty alleviation

ii.   To what extent does IT empowerment contribute to wealth creation

Research Hypothesis

H_{01}:   Youths, parents and employers of labour do not significantly differ in the mean ratings of their opinion on the extent to which IT empowerment contribute poverty alleviation.

H_{02}:   Youths, parents and employers of labour do not significantly differ in the mean ratings of their opinion on the extent to which IT empowerment contribute to wealth creation.

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted to find out the role of IT for the generation of income and employment opportunities to curb poverty and wealth creation in Nigeria. According to Akueze and Aga (2003), descriptive survey research describes and interprets what is, it seeks to find out the conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident or trends that are developing. It also used when the whole population of the study is being used.

The study was carried out at Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe (NOCEN) in Anambra State of Nigeria. It was limited to the computer business center area of the college, which is privately owned.

The target population consists of youths, parents and employers of labours at Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe (NOCEN) in Anambra State of Nigeria. The youths chosen were those employed in thirty-six (36) computer business centers in the College with the total population of 60 youths. Parents were two hundred and twenty two (222) married lecturers. The information was sourced from the personnel department of NOCEN. Employers of labours comprised of the proprietors of the thirty-six (36) computer business centers. Thus, the total population for the study is three hundred and eighteen (318) respondents.

A sample of thirty-five (35) youth were chosen out of 60, one hundred and twenty two (122) parents, and thirty-six (36) employers of labours, thus a total sample of one hundred and ninety three (193) respondents were selected. The sampling technique employed in the selection of parents and youths was simple random sampling while purposive sampling was used in that of employers of labour. This is because the population is small.

A questionnaire consisting of 16 items was constructed which was distributed to the three categories of respondents (youths, parents and employers of labour) personally.

This was built on 4 likert scales ranging from 4 to 1 point in order of Strongly Agreed (SD), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The average mean for the point is 2.50.

The instrument was validated and the reliability established using test-retest method using an interval of one month. A value of 0.8 was obtained for Pearson's product correlation co-efficient which was considered high enough as a reliability of an instrument.

Mean and standard deviation was used to analyse the data collected. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for the hypothesis at 0.05 % level of significance. Results were presented in the tables according to the research questions and hypothesis. Items with 2.50 mean and above are termed accepted and below rejected.

Research Question 1: To what extent does IT empowerment contribute to poverty alleviation?

Table 1 revealed that all the items investigated above was all accepted. This signifies that, the youth, parents and employers of labour were all accepted that IT plays a vital role in the poverty reduction in Nigeria.

The table 2 shows that Null hypothesis (H_{01}) was upheld (ie. Accepted) since $p > 0.05$; f calculated (0.97) < f critical (3.00).

The table 3 shows for that all the items investigated above, the mean scores were above the decision rule of 2.50, which signifies accepted bny the respondents that IT empowerment contributes to wealth creation.

The table 4 shows that the Null hypothesis (H_{02}) was upheld since $p > 0.05$; f calculated (0.12) < f critical (3.00), which revealed that youths, employers of labour, and parents do not significantly differ on the extent to which IT empowerment contributes to wealth creation.

Discussion of Findings
The findings of this study revealed that the three categories tested were quite aware that Information Technology (IT) plays a vital role in the wealth creation and poverty alleviation because they do not significantly differ in

their acceptance. They acknowledged that IT create and enhanced forex trading, acquisition of requisite skills for the labour market, increase and speed up production for maximization of profit for income generation for a sustainable economic growth for wealth creation. The findings is in line with Inyiama (2008) who posited that IT is an effective tool for income generation and employment opportunities for wealth creation and poverty eradication in Nigeria.

Furthermore, table 2 showed that IT is a palatable platform for the provision of minimal jobs for self-reliant such as call center, selling of cards, repairing of phones, loading of music and internet accessories, web designing, networking, typesetting, designing of cards and calendars for acquisition of money for poverty alleviation and economic growth for wealth creation.

Recommendations
Despite all these enormous potentials of IT, it will not be realized unless if the following supporting strategies are on the ground for its realization.

(1) Appropriate awareness creation among the communities on the use of IT for self employment as a viable option.

(2) Collaborative effort to provide the necessary infrastructure to ensure effective IT implementation in the communities.

(3) Solar power can be provided to improve power supply to the community based telecenters.

(4) Pursue effort to promote mass literacy among the people especially the rural dwellers.

(5) Capacity building and training should also be provided in addition to IT skills to train individuals in other skills such as financial management skills, time management finding investment opportunities on the net (Ekanya, 2007).

Conclusion
The potential of ICT to make deference in the lives of people globally is a fact that has come to be accepted by all. ICT's provides a variable plat form for usage sophisticated Technologist to provide solutions to many of problems of people every where especially in the face of grinding poverty faced by many nations of the world. ICT is an enabler release of people's creativity potentials and exploitation of knowledge for generation of wealth.

A lot of studies have revealed that ICT sector when compared with other sectors eg manufacturing has a powerful effect on the economy of nation. Wealth generation is becoming more tied to the capacity to add values using ICT product and services to address the scourge of poverty around the doors of many nation. Nigeria must advocate and deploy ICT as a panacea for achieving sustainable development and economic growth for creating wealth and eradication of poverty for the masses.

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Table 1: Mean ratings responses on IT empowerment for poverty alleviation

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN			Avg.	Sd.	Dec.
		Youths	Employers of labour	Parents			
1	Acquisition of IT skills education exposes one's talent and offers adequate links to labour market for income generation	3.60	3.70	3.34	3.55	0.994	Acc
2	Training in forex can now be done via internet through IT for generation of income	3.76	3.71	3.42	3.63	1.523	Acc
3	Youths can now engage in menial job through IT acquisition of money	3.50	3.60	3.72	3.61	0.788	Acc
4	IT increases farmers income when information about crops status and new innovation are provided	3.70	3.80	3.60	3.70	1.087	Acc
5	Application of IT in the firm helps to increase productivity for income generation	3.20	3.12	3.36	3.23	0781	Acc
6	IT acquisition/ knowledge speeds up the business for maximum profit	3.76	3.63	3.56	3.65	0.996	Acc
7	IT acquired skills have a positive effect on one's standard of living	3.65	3.60	3.84	3.69	0.576	Acc
8	Negligence of IT empowerment leads to low income yield in our economy	3.72	3.67	3.80	3.73	1.042	Acc
	Average Mean	3.61	3.60	3.58			

Table 2: One way ANOVA test of difference on poverty alleviation

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom (df)	Mean Sum of squares	F cal	F critical
Between groups	0.59	2	0.30	0.97	3.00
Within groups	58.81	190	0.31		
Total	57.40	192			

Table 3: Mean ratings responses on IT empowerment for wealth creation

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN			Avg.	Sd.	Dec.
		Youths	Employers of labour	Parents			
1	Forex trading can now transact via internet through IT to provide employment to millions of people	3.60	3.70	3.34	3.55	0.994	Acc
2	IT empowerment develops one's spirit of being self employed to alleviate poverty	3.70	2.70	3.06	3.15	0.834	Acc
3	Inability to acquire IT skills demanded by the labour market makes	3.94	3.26	3.46	3.55	1.037	Acc
4	ICT provides self reliant jobs such as small outlet for making calls, repairing of phones, loading of music, etc.	3.94	3.46	3.26	3.55	1.037	Acc
5	IT provides a rapid pollination of ideas in creation of new business ideas and market which will benefit many	3.70	3.60	3.34	3.55	0.994	Acc
6	IT acquisition enables individuals to be self reliant or employed in the areas of computer hardware installation, networking and database management	3.65	3.60	3.00	3.42	0.516	Acc

7	IT empowerment empowers individuals in the area of program development for employment opportunities in big organization	3.63	3.60	3.94	3.72	0.992	Acc
8	IT awareness enables individual via internet to abreast areas of employment opportunities	3.60	3.60	3.61	3.60	0.992	Acc
	Average Mean	3.76	3.48	3.42			

Table 4: One way ANOVA test of difference on wealth creation

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom (df)	Mean Sum of squares	F cal	F critical
Between groups	0.22	2	0.11	0.12	3.00
Within groups	176.51	190	0.93		
Total	176.73	192			