

Relevance of ICT in Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to look at the relevance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in sustainable development. The paper discussed on what is development, concept of ICT, ICT in Nigeria and relevance of ICT in sustainable development. The paper finally concluded by making recommendations that when implemented would make Nigeria develops in faster pace.

Keywords: Information and Communication Technology, sustainable development

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In both developed and developing countries, Integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) into various fields of profession is not a new topic (Saud et al 2011). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is regarded as a driver and enabler of economic development in most economies of a nation, these brought about changes in the way businesses are conducted, Nigeria is fully integrated.

The term ICT refers to Information and Communication Technology. As it is known today, information and communication technology is the application of computers and telecommunications equipment use to communicate, exchange, create, capture, plan, control, coordinate, store, retrieve,

transmit and manipulate information/data of an organization to facilitate decision making (Nnoduka, 2014). Many organizations now employ information data to take appropriate decision making on the information given. It is also widely viewed as a means of effecting global changes, which can translate directly to increased growth in all dimensions of human endeavor (Nnoduka 2013). However, with the world moving rapidly into digital media and information, the role of ICTs generally becoming more and more important and this importance will continue to grow and develop in many years to come. It is impossible to imagine life today without the use of computers (Oye, Lahad, and Shakil 2011)

Presently, we are in the information era whereby technology has directly

transformed the system of our lives without which nothing can work perfectly. So, for any nation to move ahead and compete in the global environment there must be the presence of information communication technology. It is therefore very important to make the full use of these technologies in order to compete in today's global market place (Sabry, 2009; Ibezim and Obi 2013).

The essence of sustainable development is to allow the present generation to meet their needs without compromising the ability of the next generations to meet theirs. The purpose of this paper is to look at the relevance of Information and Communication Technology towards sustainable development in Nigeria.

2. What is development?

The word 'Development' in its simplest term is synonymous with growth. In the context of society, it is the sustained elevation of an entire society and social system toward a "better" or "more humane" life (Oguntimehin and Nwosu 2014). In the words of Pearson (1970) "development is partly a process whereby a country achieves reasonable self-sustaining growth, process which facilitates and enhances industrial and technological process in the interest of its people". In Nigeria and any other nation sustainable development can only be possible if there is a stable economy that will sustain the nation development.

Sustainable development is all about allowing this present generation to meet their needs without compromising the ability of the next generations to meet theirs. In other words, it is the rational management of human, natural, and economic resources that

aims to satisfy the essential needs of humanity in the very long term. Unemployment, insecurity, political, social tolerance and poverty are among other socio-economic development challenges that bedevil Nigeria and Nigerians (Wahid, Aminu and Rukayat 2015). Therefore, Sustainable development can only be achieved through long-term investments in economics, human and environmental capital. Today, majority of youngster are underutilized due to the high rate of unemployment, but better use of youngster in the information and communication technology could help to increase the economic growth, reduce poverty, enhance societal well-being and help ensure sustainable development in the country.

3.0 Concept of ICT

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has been described 'as a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and to create, disseminate, store and manage information' of an organization (Toro and Joshi 2012). This broad definition of ICT includes technologies such as radio, television, video, DVD, telephone, satellite systems, computer and network hardware and software as well as the equipment and services. Previously it was called Information Technology (IT) but when communication element is added it becomes ICT.

3.1 ICT in Nigeria

Presently in Nigeria the increase rate of ICT infrastructures if compare with other developing countries such as South-Africa, Malaysia is still low. But there has been

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increase in Internet penetration and the use of ICT particularly in the areas of health, education, business, agriculture, government/administration in the last 5 years. Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa, going by the 2006 census, the nation's population was put at 140,431,790 and projections for the future indicate that the population could be over 180 million by the year 2020, given the annual growth rate of 4.5 percent (National Population Commission and ICF Macro, 2012).

In Nigeria, the Federal Executive Council approved the National Information

Technology Policy in March 2001 and the implementation started in April with the establishment of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), in charge of the mission to make Nigeria an ICT-capable country in Africa and a key player in the Information Society, while using ICT as a catalyst for sustainable development and global competitiveness (ICT4D Nigeria Annual Report, 2007).

Fig.1 shows some access to ICT by Nigerians.

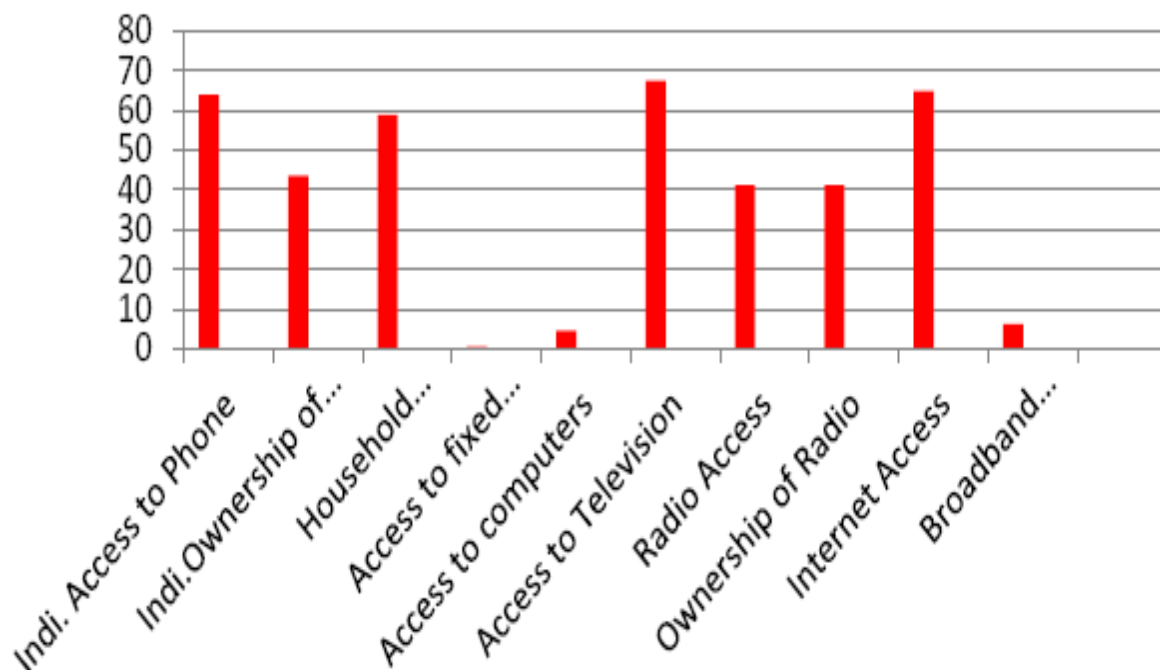


Figure 2: Access to ICT Sources in Nigeria (Oladimeji & Folayan, 2018)

4.0 The relevance of ICT

Today, it is impossible to imagine life entirely without the application of computer

system into it. This application of computer system has changed the practice and procedures within many businesses. The

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relevance of ICT tools in sustainable development of a nation is of paramount important and this importance will continue to advance in many years to come. Aleksic-Maslac, (2012) correctly argues that the use of ICT in sustainable development is to strengthening the nation economic development this should be in making the economy to be of good quality standard.

At this present time we are, the role of ICT not only in education cannot be underestimated if consider the greater value and the role of ICT plays toward strengthening and ensuring the quality of economic development of a nation. However, the role of information and communication technology in sustainable development of a nation is to support the nation desire mission, vision, and goals articulated in its strategic plan; this would be achieved through good strategic information management and process.

With the introduction of ICT, effective communication among us is also improved, but what makes it to improve is the application of ICT tools in the process. This can be concluded based on the stated above, that there are numerous opportunities and benefits in the use of ICT. This indicates that ICT provides better opportunities and benefits to youngster enhancing their knowledge.

Another important role of ICT is access to the internet and mobile networks. This mostly allow less privilege people around the world to access banking services, medical services, markets and many other things. The spread of internet and mobile services has allow people to secure

transactions and also help to disseminate information by allowing people to access information data and the use of transfer of knowledge. Business entrepreneurs can access and secure small business loans. Farmers can access to the best practices for irrigation and fertilization. Medical workers can easily diagnose and even obtain prescriptions and register cases via mobile technology and internet.

CONCLUSION

This paper deals with the relevance of information and communication technology in sustainable development with regard to the sustainable development in the country; it is clearly shows that the usage of ICT in the country still needs encouragement.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion made from this paper, the following key points may be considered as recommendations.

1. There should be an ICT policy for all segments of government and private sectors and each should have its own policy tailored to meet its specification.
2. The status of ICT availability in the country should be determined. If found to be inadequate, funds should be made available for the procurement of adequate and relevant ones.
3. Capacity building mechanisms should be put in place to empower the usage of ICTs.
4. More studies on different aspects of ICT usage in all segments of government and economy sector should be encouraged.

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