



APPLYING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL TO ACHIEVE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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ABSTRACT

Technological education is a sine-qua-non in the development of any society. In Nigeria's millennium development goal attainment, technological education is vital to its attainment and ICT, the hub of modern scientific development is of great importance to this attainment. The primary aim of this paper is to showcase the importance of information and communication technology in different areas of educational development as a panacea to achieving the anticipated millennium development goal.

INTRODUCTION

The millennium summit of September 2000 which was the largest gathering of world leaders in history adopted a Millennium Declaration that committed nations to reduce poverty amongst its citizens, improve their health standard and peace, human rights and environmental sustainability. According to Zubair (2000) : “The eight millennium development goals set out a mutual commitment between developed and developing countries, to make sustained progress towards achieving the millennium development goals vision”. Specifically, “the MDG’s are a global compact between developing and developed countries and they become the fulcrum on which the international communities engage around” Az-Zubair (2000). The

outlined eight goals of the MDG’s are:

1. Eradication of poverty and hunger.
2. Achievement of Universal Primary Education.
3. Promoting gender equality and women empowerment.
4. Reducing child mortality.
5. Improving maternal health
6. Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases.
7. Ensuring environmental sustainability.
8. Developing a global partnership for development

These eight goals are the primary necessity for material development in the quality of life of citizens in our nation and its attainment can be fast

tracked through technological development.

Technology has been defined as a systematic study of technique for making and doing things by man. Better still, it is the means of activity by which man seek change of manipulating his environment (Ebenir, 2002). It has also been defined as an assembly of equipment, often of a complex nature, which discharges a given function such as electricity generation, transmission, distribution of satellite communication, etc. (Obanu, 2008). The sustainable development of any nation, which redefines such a nation as being rich and prosperous or poor and backward, is dependent on its technological development and this invariable defines a nation's quality of life and expectancy.

Technology is the usage and knowledge of tools, techniques, crafts, systems or method of organization in order to solve a problem or create an artistic perspective. Technologies significantly affect human as well as other animal species ability to control and adapt to their natural environments. The human species use of technology began with the conversion of natural resources into simple tools. The recent technological development of telephones and the internet have lessened physical barriers to communication and allowed humans to interact freely. On a global scale, technology has

Technology in Education

affected society in many ways. It has helped in the development of more advanced economics and his facilitated educational developments of nations. Education can be looked upon as the transfer of accumulated knowledge and experience such that the recipients would acquire knowledge and experience such that the recipients would acquire knowledge and experience for a life of fulfillment (Obanu, 2008). Education in the largest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind and character or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge skills and values from one generation to another. Education in Nigeria is traditionally formal or informal. Informal education entails a person – to – person transfer of knowledge and experience without structural organization. Examples include a child learning from the mother and master craftsman transferring traditional technology to an apprentice. It is by informal education that most craftsman and artisans like carpenters, tailors, mechanics etc., receive their training and acquire their knowledge or skill.

Formal education starts from the primary or elementary school which consists of the first 5 – 7 years of formal, structural education. In general, primary education consists of six or eight years of schooling starting at the age of five or six, although there is a lot of variation these days. Under the education for all program driven by UNESCO, most countries have committed to achieving universal enrollment in primary education by 2020 which is one of the millennium goals. Nigeria's education system in the 1970s and 1980s included handicraft and handwork by pupils which was a basic training in technological development, but this is not a practice today. Our hand craft centers are abandoned and children use other things in place of handwork. In the secondary level, science subjects are taught without laboratories and introductory technology and craft taught without workshops and practical. This trend is extending to higher institution leading to the production of unbaked graduates. Technological education is vital to the attainment of the millennium development goals and this can be achieved by providing basic amenities for training in our tertiary institutions. More so encouraging proficiency and de-emphasizing certificate and paper

qualification as criteria for certain attainments will be of importance.

Technological Development of Nigeria and other Nations

There is a great need to re – orient Nigeria's development needs through technological development. This needs emphasizing and encouraging practical training of students for knowledge and skill acquisition in the technical field. Celebrating of Golden jubilee without meaningful development in Nigeria is very disheartening. Some fifteen years ago, Nigeria was categorized as a developing nation with South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia. These countries now referred to as Asian Tigers have gone thousands of miles ahead of Nigeria because of their regard for technological development and application of this technology in all spheres of their countries development policies. An instance of Malaysia that picked palm fruit from Nigeria and tried it in their country found it productive.

Today Malaysia with the aid of technology is one of the world's largest producers and export of palm oil while Nigeria has lost all spheres of development in palm oil production because of dependence on crude oil.

ICT and Technological Education

Az – Zubair (2000) said ICT are keys to any development strategy and will be instrumental in transforming the Nigerian economy into a globally competitive one. The 21st century is a

knowledge age built on innovations and there is a direct correlation between the benefit of ICTs and the challenges faced achieving the MDG's Az – Zubair (2000).

The prevailing MDG challenges which could be tackled by ICTs are:

1. High illiteracy rate
2. Low quality of public education facilities and delivery.
3. High maternal mortality rates and deaths of children
4. Prevalence of diseases, malaria, TB, Polio, HIV/AIDS.
5. High unemployment and progressively lesser opportunities for youths and first time job seekers.

Information and communication technology is a recent development which is a digital merging of computing with high speed communication links, carrying data, sound and video. This technology is applied in many fields of life with promises of faster, better and cheaper operations. The application of ICT to technological education will create leverage that will aid attaining the MDG. Sequel to the above identified challenges, we need to discuss how ICT could be used to achieve the MDGs.

- 1. High Illiteracy Rate :** Improving literacy rates can be achieved with the help of ICT application to remote areas. The

use of mobile cell phones has gone a long way to improve communication amongst individuals in both urban and rural areas. The government should use the recently launched NICOM SAT1 and NICOM SATx facilities to extent satellite facilities to rural areas as this will no doubt boast ICT literacy rate in the rural areas. Then there can be growth in the use of computers and the internet. With available materials, one can teach oneself.

- 2. Low Quality of Public Education facilities and Delivery:** Our public primary, secondary and tertiary institutions are below standard. The government has out rightly abandoned these schools to their fate. The only help to the deteriorating rate of education in Nigeria is the use of computers which can help individual learn from their houses through e-learning. E-learning is a way of educational exposure used in many advanced societies. The introduction of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) by the Obasanjo administration (1999 – 2007) is one way of deploying E-learning, as it helps people study and write their examination with the use of

computers. This creates room for computer literacy coupled with acquisition of knowledge in the specified area of interest. However, this is not practically achievable if there is no steady power supply. The government should therefore encourage the delivery of E – learning and other E – applications by providing basic power supply to the populace.

3. High Maternal Mortality Rates and Deaths of Children:

One primary goal of MDG is to improve the mortality rate of Nigerians and this can also be achieved with the aid of computers through the use of specialized software called expert software. DENDRILLS is an expert software that helps in parent diagnosis. The use of such software and development of similar software to help medical experts to carry out diagnosis and medication will help in improving medical care, thereby reducing maternal mortality rates and deaths of children.

4. High Unemployment Rate:

The unemployment rate which has been on the increase can be attested leveraged with development in ICT, the introduction of the cell phone and the development in communication which led to

improvement in internet operations and the use of Cyber Cafes, created employment for young school leavers. People get opportunities through the internet in and outside Nigeria and lots of people get lots of contact through the use of ICT facilities. ICT therefore has been on the aid of unemployment.

Conclusion

From our discussion so far it can be seen that Technological education is a prerequisite to millennium development goal and this can be done through exposure and application of ICT which has actually helped nations that saw the need for technological development and applied it in their national policy like the Asian tigers. These countries who were in the same pedestal with Nigeria are now far ahead of us because they have made good use of their technological development.

Recommendation

1. Encourage the development of artisans and handcrafts like the National Directorate of employment (NDE) is doing.
2. Equip the available craft centers for students to learn how to use or make crafts.
3. Technical colleges should be equipped to help develop the zeal of young people in technical crafts.

4. Government should try and encourage technological education and equip polytechnics and Universities of Technology with current equipment.
5. Every institution should encourage development of ICT centers which is the base of technological research in modern time.
6. The importance, use and application of computers in diversified area of life should be emphasized.
7. Practical skills and entrepreneurship should be encouraged in place of paper certificate in areas where practical technological knowledge matters.
8. Managers of industries should encourage and promote technical staffs who are practically competent as a motivational factor.
9. Government and other employers of labour should pay their workers very well to motivate them to give in their best in an effort to boost technological education.

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Conversation Lecture

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