

# INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) AND GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA: THE 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGES

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## ABSTRACT

*This study investigated the relationship between Information and Communication Technology [ICT] and graduate and non-graduate unemployment in Ogun-State, Nigeria. As a descriptive survey, the study's population comprised all graduates and non-graduates in the twenty [20] local governments in the State. Out of this population, a sample of unemployed graduates and non-graduates in three [3] prominent local governments was selected. Out of the 10,556 graduates and 5,150 non-graduates in the sample, 6,256 graduates and 3,308 school certificate holders were selected through the multi-stage and stratified random sampling techniques. The instrument used for the study was questionnaire. Responses were however received from 1,202 respondents. This made up of 862 unemployed graduates and 340 non-graduates making a total of 78.7%. The data collected were analyzed using percentages and t-test. The findings showed that ICT played significant role in solving unemployment problems. Based on the findings, it was recommended that ICT should either be hired or procured adequately to meet the search and challenges of unemployment in the 21st century in Nigeria. The state government should live up to its expectation in providing and subsidizing ICT cost and training for students at secondary and tertiary levels of education.*

**Keywords:** *ICT, graduates, unemployment, challenges*

## INTRODUCTION

Access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a veritable factor in relationships within the communities of the world. The role of ICT involves the enhancement of information that gears proper understanding between people living in the community. The knowledge and access to ICT determine the effect of their contributions to and impact towards followership acquisition of the basic employable skills. Contributing to this, Akuegwu, Udida and Uwi [2007] assert that lack of skill-oriented education acquired by majority of our University graduates accounted for high employment rate that stood at 27.9% as at 2005.

Information and Communication Technology can be defined as computer based tool used by people to work with the information communication processing needs of an organization. It includes the computer hardware and software, the network and several other devices -video, audio, photograph cameras, computer set, lap-tops, and so on, that convert information -texts, images, sounds motions and so on into common digital form. Corroborating this is, Miken Exchange on Education Technology [1999] which confirms that ICT as a tool tremendous help in improving

the quality of teaching and learning in universities and acknowledge that it is not only in Nigeria but world over that ICT has become natural part of mans daily life-cutting across academics business and human endeavors. Akuegwu, Udida and Uwi in Yusuf [2005] assert ICT to have transformed human society from the information technology age. Poverty Alleviation program of the Federal Government of Nigeria has great intension of positively transforming the community and its people to self-employable and self-sustainable people whose reliability on government for sustainability would be at the barest minimum in all works of life.

In pursuance to this goal, the government aimed at achieving this through self acquisition of basic skills that will enable the citizens' function effectively for themselves and their societies. In the schools, vocational courses have been introduced into the curriculum as courses in the area of home economics, tie and dye, fine and applied arts, practical agriculture, secretarial studies, business education, computer literacy programme, food, drinks and beverages, technology etc. Outside the school, and closely related to the program of the office of the First Ladies are various sponsors for seminars, workshops and conferences at the state and local governments' level. The teaching and training in acquisition of basic skills which enables self-employment in the areas like soap-making, tie and die, fashion designing, candle, cream and pomade making amongst others, are aided through the provision of micro finance scheme and direct sponsorship by local government and banks designated for agricultural loans and assistance.

Suffice to these, is the entrepreneurial studies that was introduced during the Obasanjos regime in 2006, through the National university commission was advised to include compulsory Entrepreneurial studies for all undergraduate courses in Nigeria universities in 2007-2008 academic session, this is to equip university graduates with the knowledge and skills required for self employment through-out the nation. (un news 2006). Amazingly, before the importance of ICT was discovered, the various information available to individuals was restricted by the number of radio and television available to individuals and only few could afford the N2 [coin] which dailies were sold in 1973. It was a period that a jobless individual was only 100 meters away from the job he was looking for but information inadequacy prevented him from knowing the existence of the job. Chakava (1993) posits that many African authors complained of being prevented from getting their books where there are would-be buyers due to information constraints. This may be inadequate places or unreachable places. Buttressing Chakavas assertion in Foncher [1999], whose view supported the frustrating and time consuming of old telecommunication infrastructure of telex, fax, and telephone which are expensive, unreliable, and inactive as well as slow at the same time.

Based on the above, it is therefore imperative to ponder on the following question: How well has ICT affected the poverty alleviation and unemployment level in Nigeria and how do we ascertain the level of ICT that would reduce the present level of unemployment in Ogun State.

## **ICT AND GRADUTES UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA**

Developing countries the world over at various strata and at micro and macro levels are daily witnessing peculiar information and communication upsurge in one kind of experience at national, public and private organization levels (Ajibade 1997). Accordingly, information communication technology crises affecting the ranging levels of people's standard of living, poverty level has now gained the attention of economic observer's through-out the world. They have linked the problems of under employment and socio-economic crisis to information inadequacies. In this context, Information Communication Technologies ICTs have been perceived as availability and accessibility of internet facilities, telecommunication equipments and services media and broadcasting, libraries and documentation centers, commercial information providers, network-based information services and other related information and communication activities (INASP,2001).

Past researches indicate that information communication technologies are infrastructures whose provision accelerates, most profoundly the economic development of a nation. Accordingly, Kessides [1993] posited that infrastructure contributes to economic development both by increasing productivity and by providing amenities which enhance the quality of life. From these, we may deduce that the services generated by infrastructure investment led to growth in the production of firms in two ways; firstly, they serve as immediate inputs to production, thus permitting higher levels of output, income and or employment. Secondly, it raises the productivity of other factors. Ajayi [2002] declared that information has taken the fore-front in strategic resource, commodity and foundation of every daily activity. It has been grouped with daily activities like water and electricity and now a major factor in socio-economic development of every nation of the world. It plays significant role in education, learning and research, agriculture, health, commerce and even poverty alleviation by generating new jobs and investment opportunities [Oshiotse, Okuilagwe and Ifeanyichukwu, 2002].

The position of Information Communication Technology and its contribution to national development was better explained by Ajayi [2002] when he posited that the Federal Executive Council of Nigeria approved the implementation of the draft IT policy early in March, 2002 which then immediately pave way for the development of Information Technology Infrastructures and the creation of an enabling environment for private sector initiatives and investment to drive the information technology industry positively. It's of course the management that decides the modus operandi of the acquisition, integration and use of ICT to various management levels. While the information infrastructural accessibility dictates the pace and use of information available to individual in the community.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted descriptive survey research design with an objective of collecting and interpreting of facts already established without undue pressure of manipulation. The basic aim is to find and provide sound information source in which strategic plans can be drawn to reduce poverty and unemployment at all levels.

In this regard, the population of this study comprised about 10,556 graduates of universities, polytechnics and colleges of education including 5,150 school certificate holders whose application are registered at the teaching service commission, ministry of labor and productivity, civil service commission, local government education authority as well as other institutions which produce and employ young graduates in the state-Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye., Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu-Ode and Tai Solarin College of Education, Omu-Ijebu. These fall within the three local governments' chosen Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode and Ijebu North Local Government Authorities of Ogun State, Nigeria. In selecting the sample, the multi-stage sample and stratified random sampling techniques were adopted. Thus, out of the population, a sample of three [3] local governments out of the twenty [20] local governments were selected for the study. Out of the 6,252 graduates and 3,308 schools certificate holders job seekers in the state, 1202 respondents made up of 862 graduates and 340 graduates were selected. Multi-stage and stratified random sampling techniques were used to select the variables for the study.

A questionnaire which comprised questions on ICT impacts on quality education and acquisition of skilled education was used along with others. The content validity of the instrument was determined by the experts in ICT and tests and measurement while reliability was determined by test-retest reliability technique and also, a correlation co-efficient of 0.88 was found indicating that the instrument was reliable. Returns were received from 1112 respondents out of which 52 were not completely filled and were removed. The remaining questionnaire form the 960 used for the study. In the 960 respondents were 710 graduates and 250 non-graduates consisting 86.33% of the total respondents to whom the questionnaire were administered. The data collected were then analyzed using percentage and t-test.

**Table 1:** Level of Graduate and non-graduate Unemployment

Variables	N	High	%	Moderate	%	Low	%
Accessible ICT	960	522	54.38	232	24.17	206	21.45
Lack of skill-oriented Education	960	540	56.25	228	23.75	192	20.00
Solution through workshops	960	532	55.42	242	25.21	186	19.35
Compulsory ICT & Entre Educ.	960	506	52.71	214	22.29	240	25.00
Cost & Purchase of ICT	960	554	57.71	206	21.46	200	20.83

From the table above, some members of the sample were of the opinion that availability and accessibility to ICT would help reduce the level of unemployment and poverty in the state while others claimed that lack of skill-oriented education from various institutions attended by job seekers were responsible for high unemployment level in the state. It was also revealed that seminars, conferences and workshops on ICT organized by office of the First Ladies would help reduce level of unemployment. Some respondents agreed to the notion that compulsory entrepreneurial studies and ICT would solve the problem. It is generally believed that job creation would be made in place of job seeking.

Finally, other respondents claimed that the cost of procuring or hiring ICT

was high in relation to funds available to an unemployed graduate. However, on the whole, it can be deduced from the findings that, averagely ICT and skill-oriented education are important tools in job seeking, and that the merging of the two would help solve the problem of unemployment in order to alleviate poverty in its entire ramifications.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between skill-oriented education and high unemployment rate in Ogun State.

**Table 2:** t-test on skill-oriented education

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal	t-value	Sign. level
Skill-oriented education	540	56.25	6.10	958	0.62	1.96	0.05

An examination of this results presented on the table above revealed that skill-oriented education is highly significant. The null hypothesis was accepted because t-value was found to be lesser than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 significant levels and 958 degree of freedom.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no difference in education provided with ICT and education provided without ICT.

**Table 3:** t-test on education provided with ICT

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-value	Sign. level
Skill-oriented education with ICT	532	55.41	5.76	958	0.59	1.87	0.05

The result presented above reflected that ICT is significant in the provision of education. The null hypothesis was accepted because the critical t-value of 1.87 was greater than t-calculated of 0.59 at 0.05 significant level and 958 degree of freedom.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the level of unemployment as a result of conferences and seminars organized by First Ladies in the State.

**Table 4:** t-test on impact of conferences and workshops on unemployment level in Ogun State

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-value	Sign. level
Conf erences/workshops	506	52.71	4.99	958	0.42	1.65	0.05

The various conferences, workshops and seminars organized and sponsored by First Ladies at the local and states level have had their impacts on the level of unemployment in the state. This was confirmed by the population t-test.[t-test of the sample mean]. The result of the above was that the null-hypothesis was accepted since the critical value of t is greater than the t-calculated.

**Ho<sub>4</sub>:** There is no significant difference in graduates and non-graduates who hired and procured ICT and those who did not.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-value	Sign. level
Cost of hiring & Purchase of ICT	554	57.71	5.31	958	0.52	1.78	0.05

The result presented above showed that the cost of hiring and procurement of ICT was higher but desirable and significant. Therefore the null-hypothesis was accepted because the t-value of 1.78 was greater than t-calculated of 0.52 at 0.05 significant level.

In the foregoing, the influence of ICT on the level of education received by

undergraduates as well as that of unemployment in Ogun-State was clearly made. The study examined the importance of ICT to individual job seeker in finding solution to problem of joblessness, in terms of graduate and non-graduate unemployment, accessibility to ICT, effect of ICT and compulsory entrepreneurial studies in job seeking, types of job available in work places and cost of hiring and procuring of ICT to fresh graduates and non-graduates of educational institutions in Ogun-State. The findings showed that the level of unemployment due to inadequacies of ICT was high thereby agreeing with the findings of researchers like Akuegwu, Udida, and Uwi [2007].

Supporting the usefulness as an indispensable tool in improving quality of teaching and learning in the universities is the Milken Exchange on Education Technology [1999], Akuegwu, Udida and Uwi [2005] when they claimed that ICT is now a part of man`s daily life , cutting across academics, business and human endeavors. The findings of this study in respect of self acquisition of basic skill that will enable undergraduates function effectively after schooling lie in the skills acquired through the curriculum in courses like home-economics, tie and dye, fine and applied arts, practical agriculture and many more were introduced during Obasanjo's regime in 2006. This was emphasized in the compulsory entrepreneurial studies into 2007/2008 academic session. This is to equip university graduates for self employment throughout the nation according to Sun News 2006.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the findings of this study, it was discovered that the conserved potentials of ICT in solving unemployment problems in Ogun State have not been tapped by the youths. As such, graduates and non-graduates have not sought effectively and concertedly the aids and assistance pool provided by ICT, which was almost costless. It was also concluded that communication was part of mans daily life and so, should be seen, and considered as three square meals that were hardly missed. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that undergraduates and secondary school students should take vocational and entrepreneurial studies more serious while at school. They should also be involved in the practicality of these skill-oriented courses.

The youths [graduates and non-graduates] should also develop positive attitudinal change towards ICT in all endeavors and lastly, Government should intensify efforts at advertising jobs vacancies, create employment awareness, job matching, training of teachers and lecturers in vocational sections, conducting seminars, workshops and conferences on strategies that would enhance better living standard rather than leaving it to their wives, cost of living and procurement of ICT tools should also be minimized by subsidizing payments on air times paid at the cyber café through out the country.

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