

Chapter 2

Entrepreneurial and Innovative Opportunities of Smart Working and Distance Learning

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 crisis has enabled most tertiary institutions as well as business organizations worldwide to search for other means of imparting knowledge to students as well as carrying out business activities. This has given rise to both smart working and distance learning. This transformation process faces a number of complexities from both institutions and business organizations. Putting these aside, it has also generated opportunities for entrepreneurs to be innovative in pursuing entrepreneurial activities by functioning maximally well within the distance learning domain. Distance learning has created opportunities to enhance the education system and prepare the learners for potential future emergencies. Smart working on the other hand, has enabled organizations to carry out businesses anywhere and everywhere. This chapter therefore, examined the entrepreneurial and innovative opportunities of smart working and distance learning within a developing country perspective with implications for practice, society and policies

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INTRODUCTION

As organizations and working culture evolves, so does the need to enable, engage and reward people in innovative ways. More reason businesses strive for sharper service, lower overhead costs and higher motivation that is translating into competition for the brightest and best staff; thus making the innovative ecosystem intense and highly competitive. However, organizations need to employ prospective staff more efficiently, keep them engaged and inspired to be best at what they do by embracing technological innovations cum entrepreneurial strategies. This can be achieved through appropriate human resource management so that organizational staff can fit into the contemporary discourse of entrepreneurial and innovative opportunities of smart working ushered in by the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic which has redefined all aspect of human existence of which the distance learning domain globally is not an exception.

Increasingly, smart working and the use of mobile technology is empowering staff to choose when and how to work which has been accentuated by the pandemic. To this end, smart working which are set of practices that add greater flexibility to work methods through innovative solutions has come to bare. Flexible location, schedule, hours worked and shared responsibility are some of the markers of smart working. Similarly, technology is transforming the way businesses are being done and impacting how values are being created, delivered and captured, most especially in the educational sector that the distance learning domain is domiciled which cannot dispute the indispensability of smart working in this fourth industrial revolution era (4thIR). Therefore, there is expected to be a symbiotic relationship between the principles of smart working and distance learning which is aimed to provide uninterrupted educational benefits to whoever is interested remotely so that everyone have the requisite educational training which is the fundamental tenets of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) (Bakare & Okuonghae, 2022). This can connect students to universities worldwide, making it more accessible for students in different countries to interact on the global space seamlessly with University staff. It is also known to be more affordable, which is another factor that helps make education more accessible to many students around the world and in different socio-economic levels. However, despite the innovative opportunities of smart working which when embraced and entrenched within the domain of distance learning, brings out entrepreneurial opportunities as is being witnessed in the global north, the same cannot be said of countries in the global south of which Nigeria is not an exception. It is based on this premise that this chapter tends to explore the entrepreneurial and innovative opportunities of smart working and distance learning

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