

## Chapter 2

# ICT Integration in Nigeria: The Socio-Cultural Constraints

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### ABSTRACT

*In the past few decades, there has been a lineal relationship between technology and development- the belief that availability of technology would produce development. This is evident in the advancements in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), together with their rapid application in all spheres of mankind's life that have led many to call our society 'the information society'. It has become an important tool of governance that should be employed by every country-a tool Nigeria has failed to apply effectively. This paper discusses ICT integration in Nigeria, its relevance as a tool of development, socio-cultural factors constraining its integration, and suggests ways of eliminating these factors.*

### INTRODUCTION

In 2009, Nokia Siemens published a Connectivity Scorecard 2009 created by Leonard Waveman. This study shows that Nigeria has the lowest ICT penetration, potential, usage and accessibility out of 50 countries of the world sampled (Nokia Siemens Networks, 2009).

This Connectivity Scorecard measures the availability of ICTs and the extent to which people, governments and enterprise put these technologies to economically productive use. It claims to take a comprehensive look at the usage and potential

of ICT in different countries of the world. Does this result mean that Nigeria has not caught up the information age? Or does it show that Nigeria has not been able to use ICTs for innovative and developmental purposes?

A few years ago, the Federal government of Nigeria (FGN) approved some IT policies for major sectors of the industry such as 'the National Telecommunications Policy' and the National Information Technology (NIT) Policy'. The IT sector was liberalized and ICT accorded priority status. And in 2001 the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) was

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established to implement the NIT policy. (Ajayi, 2003) This agency was charged with the duty of making Nigeria an IT capable country in Africa and a key player in the Information Society by the year 2005, using IT as the engine for sustainable development and global competitiveness (National Information Technology Development Agency, 2001).

Since then, some of the projects undertaken by this agency include the Public Service Network (PSNet), Mobile Internet Unit (MIU) and the Human Capacity Development (HCD). These show that the Nigerian government has not been short of effort in the integration ICT into its governance. However, Waverman's study shows that such efforts have not been enough to bridge digital divide in Nigeria. What then are the constraints on the effective integration of ICTs in Nigeria?

This paper has identified some socio-cultural constraints on the government's efforts to apply ICTs in Nigeria. Such constraints include illiteracy, corruption, lack of basic infrastructures like electricity and poverty all of which lead to what I call *digital naivety*. But before this paper continues, it will not fail to define ICT.

## **What is ICT?**

ICT can be defined as a concept that involves the production and usage of scientific artefacts which can be used to convey or exchange information. It covers products that can store, retrieve, manipulate, transmit or receive information electronically in a digital form. For example: personal computers, network hardware and software, satellite systems digital television, radio, robots.

Therefore ICT is generally, “concerned with the storage, retrieval, manipulation, transmission or receipt of data. Importantly, it is also concerned with the way these different uses can work with each other.” (Stahl & Eke, 2009).

This is a concept that has blurred the lines between Information technology, computer technology and media technology. Technically, ICT

represents the convergence of these three defining technologies of our time.

This concept has been used severally in many writings in recent times. It is a concept that has been promoted strongly by the European Union (EU) and has been used so much in education within Europe. However, despite the huge role this concept plays in Europe it does not appear to have permeated the US computing parlance. The EU is indeed one of the foremost, if not the strongest, proponent of this concept ICT, the artefacts involved in it and their effective application to every sphere of life.

It is differentiated from Information Technology (IT) which concentrates more on the production of the artefacts alone and also Information Systems (IS) that finds meaning in organizations which usually refers to businesses.

## **ICT as a Tool of Development**

The United Nations ICT Task Force posits that one of the relevant ways of measuring the differences between developed and developing countries is in the level of ICT penetration and usage. As well as having insufficient education and health care services, developing countries lack a certain level of ICT penetration and thus lag behind in development. This gap in access to ICTs is known as the “digital divide”. This is a new social gap that can be external (measured between countries) or internal (measured between individuals living in the same society). It can also refer to access-based on the difference between individuals with access and those without access to ICTs; usage-based on individuals who know how to use these technologies and those who do not; or it can refer to usage quality-based on the differences between those same users (Camacho, 2006).

Digital divide is believed to be furthering the pauperization of the poor and expanding the gap between the rich and the poor parts of the world (Olubamise & Awe, 2007). With such programmes as ICT Task Force (UIT) and ICT For Develop-

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