

DECOLONIZING EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: RELEVANCE OF ICTS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The emergence of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the last quarter of the 20th century marked a transformative phase in the decolonization of education in Nigeria and other former colonies. As a driver of educational advancement, the adoption of ICT infrastructures has facilitated significant innovations in teaching and learning. The integration of computers and digital tools has revolutionized education, fostering skills acquisition and modernizing instructional methods an essential departure from the colonial-era reliance on manual educational practices. The widespread application of ICT in Nigeria's education system has contributed to reducing illiteracy and youth unemployment, positioning technology as a fundamental tool for national development. This paper explores key areas where ICT has impacted educational growth, emphasizing its role in shaping a more efficient and accessible learning environment. Given the historiographical nature of this study, a qualitative research approach is adopted.

Keywords: Decolonizing, Education, Teaching and Learning, ICT, Relevance, Schools

Introduction

Nigeria, located in the west coast of the African continent counts among the countries of Africa that were colonized by Britain. Her colonial encounter with Britain officially started in 1861 after the conquest of Lagos by the British army ten years earlier. This was followed by the cession of the entire Island to the Queen of England. Following this development therefore, the administration of Lagos quickly fell into the hands of the British colonial government, with the effect that all existing traditional and local administrative agreements between the island and her neighbouring nations were promptly nullified by the expatriate government of Britain. Henceforth, there was some strict adherence and allegiance to the authority of the British government by the local populations and their traditional establishments (Nkokelonye, 2005). As a former colony of the British government, the massive geographical estate later christened Nigeria after the historic amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates of the country in 1914 during the governorship regime of Lord Fredrick Lugard, comprised of an estimated 490 unique ethno-linguistic nations who share distinct and diverse indigenous cultures and traditional values. Presently, the population of the country is also estimated at about 200 million citizens who occupy a geographical area of 923,768 square kilometres. From East to West is about 767 kilometres, and from North to South is about 1,605 kilometres. Nigeria's lingua franca is the English language, a language imposed on the populations purely for the administrative convenience of the colonizing authorities of Britain. Following this development was the fact that the diversity of the indigenous languages which pre-existed the arrival of the colonial government was side-lined and utterly diminished in their relevance as official languages of administration, education, socialization, and evangelization (Lugard, 1922; Fafunwa, 1974; Federal Office of Statistics, 1989; Omolewa, 2006; Iwunna, 2011; Iwunna, Okoro, Deshi, & Dioka, 2022).

Against this background therefore, it needs to be appreciated that Nigeria's educational system was moulded from the British model of education, with the effect that the country inherited the three-level educational system from her former colonial masters. These include the primary, secondary, and tertiary educational levels, which are intended to take care of the country's developmental and human resources needs. Thus, as a territory ruled under imperial rule, the running and management of her education sector fell into the hands of the British

government for the next 99 years until political freedom was attained on 1st October, 1960. The implication is that all through the almost century-long period of colonial administration, the development of education in Nigeria, and by extension the education of Nigerians was squarely placed in the hands of the British government who in turn relegated the function to their Christian allies and compatriots from Western Europe. As a way of lending support to the educational activities of the missions however, British government disbursed various amounts of cash payments to Christian missionaries whose schools met the standards approved by the colonizing authorities of Britain (Walker, 1942; Philipson, 1948; Fafunwa, 1974). However, it is important to observe that before 1925, the British colonial government made little or no efforts towards the educational development of Nigeria and her other colonial territories in Africa. Little or no attention was paid to the educational empowerment of the peoples of the different communities embedded within the huge colonial geographical umbrella known as Nigeria. Bare forms of laissez faire attitudes were committed in the areas of educational development of British colonial territories in Africa. Following this development, lack of skills and abject illiteracy loomed with impunity among the peoples and communities of Nigeria.

In outcome, the carefree attitude of the British government led to the abandonment of the education sector into the hands of the Christian missionary allies who lacked the relevant financial muzzles and logistic capacities to engage in the project meaningfully. Compelled by such a messy situation by the British colonial administration, the Phelps-Stokes Foundation, an American based philanthropic organization was compelled to launch an investigative commission of enquiry into the commitments of the imperial government's efforts at developing the educational development of Britain's colonial territories in the African continent (Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical African Dependencies (ACNEBTAD), 1925; Fafunwa, 1974; Omenka, 1989; Omolewa, 2006). However, following the launching of the Phelps-Stokes' Fund in 1920, an investigative team led by Thomas Jesse Jones, "a Welshman who had formerly taught at Hampton Institute in Virginia" was despatched to West Africa. The team visited Nigeria from 4th November to 16th December, 1920, and travelled to Kano, Onitsha, and Calabar. The team was mandated to conduct an enquiry into the British government's activities in the educational development of Nigeria. When the team's report was eventually published in 1922, it was concluded that "western education had little prospects for success in the African colonies because it was transplanted to a soil that was unwilling to let it grow" (Omolewa, 2006: 269-270).

In view of these developments, the team's report then suggested in strong terms that formal schooling should be adapted to suit the local environments of the peoples of Nigeria, and by extension the African continent. The implication was that the curricula of formal education should be adapted to suit the environments and indigenous values of the local populations of Nigeria. It added that curricular content of secondary school education should be determined by the specific needs of the people, most especially in the areas of leadership. Based on this recommendation therefore, science subjects, physiology, hygiene, sanitation, social studies, mathematics, languages, gardening and rural economics were taught in schools. This led Omolewa (2006: 270) in categorical terms that "the report emphasized that formal schooling should in all lands, concentrate on "indigenous education" and be adapted to local needs". Thus, with the above as the colonial policy guide, the report of the Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa (1925), whose chairman was W. Ormsby-Gore, was left with no option than to succumb to the pressures of the recommendations of the Thomas Jesse Jones' commission. Following the submission of their report tagged "Education Policy in British Tropical Africa" on 13th March, 1925 it was overwhelmingly accepted by the Colonial Office, London that education in British colonies and protectorates in Tropical Africa, Nigeria inclusive, should be adapted to specific areas of native life considered crucial for the advancement of the local populations. In line with this development therefore, the following subject areas which the Colonial Office found relevant for "native education" were approved for formal education: English, Arithmetic, medical sciences, agriculture, forestry, veterinary,

survey, telegraphy, domestic hygiene (for women and girls), etc. It also approved that qualified teachers should be recruited from among the local populations of Nigeria. This special consideration was given in view of the fact that such local personnel they have been in direct contact with the natural environments (ACNEBTAD, 1925; Seghers, 2004; Omolewa, 2006).

With these in context therefore, a few major points must be highlighted. British colonial educational project in Nigeria was quite crude and rudimentary. The models of education supplied to the illiterate populations of the country were low and lacked adequate curricular contents. Its contents were practical-oriented and designed to equip learners with the capacity to acquire specific skills required to enable them perform duties that were assigned to them by the various establishments of the colonial administration in Nigeria. Aided with the skills acquired, learners became empowered with some fair knowledge they needed to function as motor drivers, auto mechanics, gardeners, plumbers, interpreters, forest guards, painters, technicians, teachers, messengers, clerks, evangelists, priests, and cleaners, among several others. As a matter of fact, these professions did not require any intricate knowledge of those skills. Rather, learners were exposed to some practical trainings which could guide them perform the duties assigned to them by the colonizing authorities, most especially as the colonial government had adjudged the indigenous populations as being unsuitable for western education (Lugard, 1922; Ekechi, 1971; Seghers, 2004; Omolewa, 2006). Thus, the invention of the digital era, starting from the last quarter of the 20th century in the United States of America when computers, photocopiers, digital cameras, CCTV cameras, digital voice recorders, laptops, IPADs, audio visual devices, internet cables, electronic photocopiers, radio networks, digi-boards, android mobile phones, flat screen television sets, wireless public address systems, computer software, computer hardware, computer network services, noise-proof power generators, internet services, electronic projectors, power points, and satellite facilities, among several others, marked a clear departure from the colonial era educational practice which was typically manual-oriented (Nkokelonye, 2005).

It is without doubt that the arrival of the numerous infrastructures of the ICT came with it the discovery of numerous professional skills which were inaccessible to humanity owing to the scope of education provided by the colonial government and their Christian missionary allies. For instance, the educational curricular contents were designed to feature those training programmes which benefitted the colonial regime and their numerous establishments basically, while the wellbeing and future development of the recipients and their communities were sidelined. Thus, in the name of providing Nigerians with the forms of “indigenous education” which were adapted to the local needs of recipients and their communities, Africans were subjected to specific educational systems, curricular contents, and examination patterns which were considered appropriate for the peoples of the colonized territories. The primary target was to create a system of education which was considered suitable for Nigerians and other colonial subjects in Africa (Lugard, 1922; ACNEBTAD, 1925; Seghers, 2004; Omolewa, 2006).

Major Colonial Educational Developments

At this stage, it is now important to examine the key roles played by a few major education commissions established by the British colonial government, which were intended to impact the educational situation of Nigeria during the colonial era. The major contributions of the commissions and ordinances shall be discussed briefly as follows:

The 1882 Education Ordinance: It is important to recognize that between 1842 and 1882, the British colonial government abandoned the educational development of Nigeria in the hands of the Christian missions, majority of who established strong bases in the southern parts of the country. During the period, the British government showed little or no interests in the educational emancipation of the peoples of the massive geographical estate later christened Nigeria in 1914. Consequently, the development of formal education within the territory grew at a slow pace, and endured numerous challenges, which included funding inadequacies, denominationalism, and lack of uniformity in the educational contents provided in schools.

Added to these factors too were the problems of lack of educational aids, non-uniformity in the methods of examinations and schooling hours. The implication was that each of the different Christian missions devised their own solutions and approaches to the challenges (Lugard, 1922; Taiwo, 1980; Odo, Ede, & Ezike, 1996; Ekechi, 1996).

Owing to the enormity of the challenges, a few critical innovations were introduced into the education sector. Among several others, it established the General Board of Education, which had the mandate to appoint or dissolve any Local Boards of Education, as were determined by their ability to comply with some approved regulations. There was the classification of primary schools into two major classes, namely those funded by public funds (government primary schools), and those funded by Christian missions, but supported with government grants-in-aid. Also, the ordinance gave parents the right to determine the religious instructions they wished for the children and wards in school. The ordinance approved a number of conditions which mission schools must meet in order to qualify for the payment of grants-in-aid. As well, the ordinance approved the appointment of an Inspector of Education for the territory, and gave room to the enrolment of all children into schools. In the history of Nigeria's colonial education, the recommendations of this Ordinance influenced the harmonization of the country's educational system, with the effect that the British government began to appreciate education as a project that was worthy of being invested on (Phillipson, 1948; Taiwo, 1980; Odo, et al, 1996).

The 1887 Education Ordinance: For the British colonial government, this ordinance was the "first purely Nigerian Education Ordinance" ever. This was preceded with the formal recognition of Lagos as a colony and protectorate under the British flag. Conceded as an autonomous administrative estate, Lagos needed a separate Education Ordinance which addressed its new status (Phillipson, 1948). According to Phillipson (1948) and Taiwo (1980), the Education Ordinance made several significant contributions. It led to the separation of Lagos Colony's administration from that of the Gold Coast, recognizing it as the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos. A separate education ordinance was created for Lagos, comprising the Governor, members of the Legislative Council, an Inspector of Schools, and four other nominees appointed by the Governor. Key appointments were made in the education sector to oversee school inspections, and the payment of grants-in-aid to schools was emphasized. Additionally, a new Board of Education was established, with revised conditions for the allocation of grants-in-aid. The ordinance also promoted religious tolerance and racial freedom in schools while ensuring that only qualified teachers were employed. Furthermore, it mandated the Governor to establish and maintain more government schools, contributing significantly to the expansion of primary education across Nigeria. However, despite these developments, the ordinance also facilitated the rise of substandard primary schools, leading to increased denominational influence among school proprietors.

1916 Education Ordinance: The promulgation of the 1916 Education Ordinance was the brainchild of Lord Fredrick Lugard, who was one of the British colonial government's chief architects of colonial education. Signed into law on 24th December, 1916, the birth of this ordinance became prominent as an instrument which unified the northern and southern protectorates of the country into a single geographical entity earlier christened Nigeria in 1914 during the regime of this British icon of imperialism. Following the merging of both protectorates, the colonial territory known as Nigeria became a massive geographical estate which comprised of a multiplicity of distinct ethno-linguistic communities and diverse cultures which are presently estimated at almost 500 in number (Lugard, 1922; Taiwo, 1980; Iwunna, 2011). It must be appreciated that with the authority of the Ordinance, the eventual unification of educational administration in both Northern and Southern protectorates into one single nation was actualized. Following this development however, rife ethnic rivalries, religious conflicts, and the cultures of political domination of minority nations became endemic with the Nigerian nation. Thus, according to Iwunna (2011), Lugard's political marriage of colonial

convenience created the cracks which continued to haunt the nation's cohesiveness, even in the post-independence years. According to Lugard (1922), Omenka (1989), Omolewa (2006), and Omolewa (2008), the 1916 Education Ordinance achieved several key milestones. It compelled Nigerians to develop a culture of tolerance and resilience in the face of severe ethnic tensions that threatened national unity. For administrative convenience, particularly in educational management, the ordinance approved the division of Nigeria into Provinces, Districts, Divisions, Clans, and Native Courts. Additionally, it facilitated the recruitment of Nigerians into administrative positions where they were deemed relevant, aligning with Lugard's Indirect Rule policy. The ordinance emphasized moral education, encouraged collaboration between the colonial government and Christian missions, promoted both rural and urban education, and reinforced government control over education. Furthermore, it played a significant role in shaping the mindset of the black race through education. However, it paid little attention to the development of post-primary education, leading to the establishment of only a few government-owned secondary schools during the colonial era. The ordinance also appeared to limit the level of development and self-actualization of the colonized people. As a result, the slow progress in post-primary education can be attributed, in part, to the enactment of the 1916 Education Ordinance. This neglect by the colonial government motivated various Christian missions to take an active role in educational development, investing in schools within communities overlooked by the imperial administration. In response to these gaps, Christian missions sought to bridge the educational divide, playing a crucial role in advancing education where colonial efforts fell short.

The Phelps-Stokes' Commission (1925)

This was a commission sponsored by an American based philanthropic organization headed by Miss Carolene Phelps-Stokes. Known as the Phelps-Stokes' Commission, the fund was endowed in 1911, with the mandates of investigating the educational projects executed by the British imperial government in her colonial territories, identify the educational needs of the colonized peoples, and ascertain the extent to which those educational needs were met. The commission was also mandated to submit the results of its enquiries as soon as investigation was concluded. After touring parts of the African continent, the commission published her report in 1922 which was tagged – Education in Africa (Fafunwa, 1974; Taiwo, 1980; Ejiogu, 2001). Earlier in 1920, the commission, after a visit to Nigeria, concluded that the contents of the education provided within the colonial territory was quite alien to the needs of the peoples, even as no attempts were made to use available local materials in the teaching of school subjects. Based on this development, there was desperate call to investigate the level of commitment made by the British colonial government towards attending to the educational needs of the peoples under her imperial rule, which included her territories in West, South and Equatorial Africa. Further to this development was the launching of a similar commission in 1923, which was mandated to conduct a similar investigation in British colonial territories in East, Central, and Southern African countries whose membership included Jesse Jones. In March, 1925 when the commission's report was eventually published, it was tagged as "The Memorandum on Education Policy in British Tropical Africa", it was counted as the first policy (Chairman) and James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey (Taiwo, 1980; Ejiogu, 2001).

Put into context, various claims have been made in favour of the commission's report. Fafunwa (1974), Ejiogu (2001), and Omolewa (2006) assert that the Phelps-Stokes Commission made significant contributions to the development of education in Africa. The publication of its report exposed the British government's lack of commitment and general disinterest in the educational advancement of its colonial territories. However, the commission's findings reignited the British government's interest and commitment to investing in Nigeria's educational development and that of other African colonies. The report also highlighted the poor state of education within British colonial territories, thereby challenging the government to take a more active role in educational reforms. In response, the British colonial administration established various educational commissions and developed policy

guidelines aimed at improving the quality and content of education for the colonized people. Additionally, the commission's report played a crucial role in dispelling the Western misconception that African people were inherently uneducable. It further assisted the British government in identifying key areas that required urgent educational development within the colonial territories. Considering these contributions, it is evident that the generosity of American philanthropists and the commitment of the Phelps-Stokes Commission significantly shaped educational reforms in Africa. The commission's efforts, as documented in its report, emphasized the necessity of investing in education as a vital development project for the colonial territories. Beyond benefiting the colonial administration, such investments were recognized as essential for improving the quality of life within African communities and equipping individuals with the necessary skills to participate in the colonial workforce (Lugard, 1922; Fafunwa, 1974; Nkokeonye, 2005).

The 1926 Education Ordinance

Basically, the establishment of the 1926 Ordinance was necessitated by the need to compel the British government to play more active roles in the control and management of the education sector within the colonial territory of Nigeria. The need to embark on this project was aggravated by the growing numbers of un-assisted primary schools operated by various Christian missions in different parts of the country. According to Fafunwa (1974), several of the schools were "unwanted" even as their Christian mission owners could no longer control and monitor their activities effectively, a situation created by low numbers of government appointed schools inspectors available to execute the functions. Ejiogu (2001) highlights several key contributions of the Ordinance to Nigeria's educational development. First, there was a significant increase in the number of unassisted primary schools across the country. Additionally, representatives from various Christian missions were appointed to the Board of Education, allowing for broader participation in educational decision-making. The Ordinance also approved the establishment of a Textbook Committee, which included renowned intellectuals and educationists, such as college principals and the Manager of the CMS Bookshop, to oversee the selection and distribution of educational materials. Furthermore, school enrollment rose considerably in both assisted and non-assisted primary schools. Financial support for government-assisted schools also saw a substantial increase, with grants rising from £35,000 for 192 schools in 1926 to £99,530 for 270 schools in 1928. These developments underscore the growing demand for formal education among Nigerians. The widespread belief that education was the key to overcoming life's challenges fueled the push for more schools. As a result, various communities, often in partnership with Christian missions, took the initiative to establish educational institutions within their localities to ensure access to learning for their children (Omenka, 1989; Omolewa, 2001).

The E. R. J. Hussey Commission (1930)

Following the appointment of Mr E. R. J. Hussey as the first Director of Education for Nigeria on 17th July, 1929 after her successful amalgamation in 1914, the task of unifying education in the Northern and Southern Protectorates was conceived. Succeeding Mr. Grier (Director in the Southern Protectorates) and Mr. Urling Smith (Director in the Northern Provinces), Hussey undertook significant educational reforms that shaped Nigeria's educational landscape. According to Ejiogu (2001) and Fafunwa (1974), his tenure led to several key developments. Hussey pioneered Nigeria's three-tier educational system, which encompassed elementary, secondary, and vocational education. Under his leadership, the commission approved the establishment of two government colleges, one in Ibadan and another in Umuahia. Additionally, the commission sanctioned the introduction of formal education for girls, a crucial milestone in expanding access to education. In 1936, government-owned teacher training colleges were established in Uyo, Ibadan, and Warri to enhance teacher preparation and professionalism. Another notable achievement of the Hussey Commission was the establishment of Yaba Higher College in 1932, which later became Yaba College of

Technology. Furthermore, the commission actively worked to dispel the misconception that teaching was solely a religion-based profession, a move that contributed to the founding of the Nigerian Union of Teachers in Lagos on July 8, 1931. These initiatives underscored the commission's recognition of education as a vital tool for human capacity development. Through its various recommendations, the Hussey Commission set Nigeria on a structured path toward systematic literacy empowerment, which played a significant role in shaping the nation's educational policies after independence. These efforts were encapsulated in the commission's *Memorandum on Educational Policy in Nigeria* (1930), a document that outlined the necessary programs for nationwide educational development (ACNEBTAD, 1925; Taiwo, 1980; Ejiogu, 2001).

The Eric Ashby Commission (1959)

As early as 1957 when a tentative date had been adopted as Nigeria's possible year of independence (1st October, 1960), a commission was established in April, 1959 to conduct an investigation into Nigeria's needs in the field of post-school certificate and higher education over the next twenty years. The seven member commission was chaired by Sir Eric Ashby from Cambridge University in England, while the other members were drawn from the diverse segments of the intellectual world, which included Prof. Kenneth O. Dike, Nigeria's foremost indigenous Vice Chancellor of the University of Ibadan. After making elaborate consultations, the commission, in September, 1960, submitted its report entitled *Investment in Education* (Ukeje, 1966; Ejiogu, 2001). The Eric Ashby Commission played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of higher education in Nigeria through its far-reaching recommendations. According to Ejiogu (2001: 74-75), the commission's contributions were instrumental in advancing the development of higher education in the country. The report generated extensive debate, analysis, and discussion among professionals and stakeholders, ultimately laying the foundation for the establishment and continuous growth of higher education institutions in Nigeria. Furthermore, the report significantly influenced Nigeria's commitment to manpower development, providing a framework for cultivating a skilled workforce essential for national progress. Additionally, the commission's report reinforced the systematic development of Nigeria's economy in the post-independence era by emphasizing the need for a well-educated and competent labor force. One of its most significant impacts was the expansion of higher educational institutions across the country after independence. The report continues to serve as a guiding policy document for Nigeria's higher educational development, influencing both local and international educational policies. Since the commission's establishment, which aimed to assess Nigeria's diverse manpower needs following political independence, the nation has witnessed remarkable growth in the higher education sector. These developments have propelled the expansion of universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, fostering increased access to higher learning across different regions of the country. The legacy of the Ashby Commission remains evident in the continuous transformation of Nigeria's higher education landscape, ensuring that the sector remains responsive to the nation's evolving developmental needs.

The ICT as Tool of Global Development

The question is: What does the question of the ICT connote? As an answer to this question, the opinions of a few authors shall provide the guide. That being the case, it must be appreciated that the ICT simply makes reference to those forms of technology-driven electronic devices which are used to create, store, process and use information in its various forms, which include data, voice, image, and multimedia presentations in order to support effective communication. The sources add further that ability to apply the facilities of the electronic devices promotes effective flow of information from source to end-user. In which case, there is a seamless process of data collection, storage, processing, transmission, and eventual presentation of information between both links, which constitute critical issues of concern to the industry. Accordingly, the sources accept the fact that the facilities of the ICT are designed

to construct knowledge, solve problems, aid the explanation of concepts and communicate ideas powerfully using the most simplistic of terms (Howell, & Lundall, 2000; Aladejana, 2007; Odo, 2015). Having made this clarification, it can then be added that since the beginning of the new millennium, the ICT industry has occupied a special place in the eyes of the global community. Nations all over the world, irrespective of the remoteness of the geographical locations find the facilities of this huge industry as a formidable partner in matters of national development. At the same time, persons and corporate bodies all over the globe have successfully keyed in to the use of the numerous facilities of this priceless industry. In the new millennium, the situation has become so complex that there is hardly any sector of human development where the facilities of this huge industry have not contributed immensely to national development. With the powers of the ICT therefore, world nations have experienced tremendous transformation, accessed critical data with ease from the comfort of their homes and offices, contributed to global development through the sharing of knowledge, and turned the entire globe into a micro-village setting where ideas are exchanged, problems get resolved, and critical issues find plausible solutions (Odo, 2015; Danbatta, 2017; Iwunna, Dimonye, Ari, Okoro, & Okeke, 2021).

In view of these developments therefore, it is quite glaring that there is virtually no part of the globe at this time where the facilities of the ICT have not found comfortable market spaces. There is no part of the globe today where users and consumers of the products and services of this global industry cannot be found in their large numbers. Most importantly, governments all over the globe, as well as corporate bodies have been able to experience tremendous growth and expansion using the facilities of the ICT. Similarly, new professional skills have been developed, and acquired by citizens of global nations using the facilities of this industry, with the implication that unemployment indexes, abject poverty, hunger and food insecurity, as well as incessant spread of criminality and violence have witnessed increased reduction around the globe.

Relevance of ICT Infrastructures

In view of the educational developments which have been discussed so far, it is now important to focus the direction of this analysis on the relevance of the ICT. This becomes crucial because of the role of this huge industry in Nigeria's post-independence era, which shall be done under the following subheadings:

Research and Development: During the colonial period, researchers travelled widely across distant lands in search of information and crucial data, spent huge amounts of money and man hours hunting for answers to their questions, and exhausted lengthy periods of time sniffing through the pages of textbooks, files and other written documents searching for solutions to problems and challenges. The invention of the digital era has provided prompt answers to those expensive activities – using the powers of the electro-technological devices of the ICT. Supported with the numerous infrastructures of the 21st century electronic devices, researchers can now access information from the comfort of their homes and offices. Under the guidance of the facilities of the ICT, crucial information could be accessed anywhere and at any time using the infrastructures of the digital era. With the aid of the various facilities of this huge industry, researchers are supported to uncover new professional skills, expand on the existing careers and opportunities, conduct enquiries that lead to improved service deliveries, develop time-saving applications that save man hour and human labour, undertake the risk of investing in creation, growth and growth development, provide solutions to unsolved problems and create wider opportunities that lead to improved service deliveries, among several others (Pember, & Humbe, 2013; Ozota, 2015).

These mark a complete departure from the colonial era educational practices which relied exclusively on manual labour and manual applications to problems solving. The implication is that the colonial era educational programmes were so much inadequate and shallow in content that relevant educational aids were never made available in schools. For the

period in question, all that mattered was to equip learners with the abilities to read, write, comprehend, and reproduce written texts – using the rote-learning method. These were considered to be “too European” in scope and content. As was the case, critics claim that these European educational practices encouraged the attitudes of hatred, arrogance, intolerance, cheating, pride, and covetousness among the learned, most especially as there was little application of the educational principles learnt in schools. However, the 21st century digital era grew beyond these levels and has equipped learners with the intellectual capabilities to remain functional, relevant, creative and resilient in various areas of human endeavour (Omolewa, 2006; Osuagwu, 2020; Umeh, 2020).

Opportunities of Jobs Creations: Quite unlike the colonial era, access to the infrastructures of the ICT created wider opportunities of skills acquisition and chances of creating jobs for millions of unemployed Nigerians, most especially the youth. Armed with the training opportunities which this lucrative industry offers to recipients, recipients acquire new skills, improve on their former professional skills, discover new opportunities for wealth creation, create improved marketing strategies for their products, assess knowledge about their existing products and services from the worldwide web (www), collaborate with partners from all over the globe, share knowledge about quality of their products and services, exchange information on strategies for improved service deliver to clients, as well as evolve skills-based opportunities that lead families out of poverty and food insecurity (Danbatta, 2017; Iwunna, et al, 2021; Orifamah, Amaechi, Iwunna, & Alison, 2022).

Against this background therefore, it can only be added that the adage which says that “an idle hand is a devil’s workshop” holds true. When Nigerians are empowered with professional skills, chances of escaping poverty, hunger, criminality, kidnapping for ransom, engaging in human trafficking, and subscribing to criminal gangs becomes very low. The implication is that when citizens are given the opportunities of acquiring lucrative professional skills, their chances of participating in community development remain quite high. As skilled citizens, contributing to family growth and national development become feasible. Considering the current severe economic challenges which the country is undergoing at the moment, Nigerians need to be empowered with lucrative skills in various areas of national development, which include the agricultural sector, medium scale industrial sector, as well as the various sectors of the private entrepreneurship. Engagement in these segments of the national economy could go a long way in reducing the nation’s unemployment indexes, contribute to wealth creation, as well as rescue Nigerians from poverty and food insecurity.

Skills Acquisitions Needs: The post-colonial era crop of Nigerians desperately needed skills in order to survive in the community, enjoy meaningful lives, attain lives of self-realization and be able to make positive contributions to national development. These countrymen and women are aware of the fact that exposure to varieties of professional skills create ample opportunities for wealth creation. For them, the invention of the digital era, also known as the ICTs in the last quarter of the 20th century opened the corridors necessary for the acquisition of wealth through skills acquisition. Assured that adaptation to the numerous infrastructures of the ICT created the necessary platforms needed for trainees to emerge as professionals in various lucrative fields of specialization learners and trainees invested their precious time and rare talents massively. This was in anticipation of a better future for themselves and family (Lugard, 1922; Omeke, 2015; Shobowale, 2022). It is against this background that parents and families lend maximum support to the children and wards acquire various skills. Following the invention of the ICT era however, it is worthy of note that varieties of professional skills have been launched into the labour market. In this digital era, skills which were never thought of during the colonial period have been invented and subsequently acquired by millions of Nigerians. Armed with such skills, reliance on monthly paid salaries is gradually winding down among families. Craze for white collar job offers is systematically growing out of fashion. Nigerians employed in monthly paid services have acquired new professional skills which have improved

their incoming earning capacities and created additional sources of income generation. Thus, the era of single digit sources of income is gradually growing downwards among Nigerians (Onuoha, 2010; Osuagwu, 2020; Umeh, 2020; Shobowale, 2022).

For instance, with the aid of ICT infrastructures alone, Nigerians have acquired skills in the following areas of national development: computer networking, graphic designing, computer networking, computer maintenance, sign writing, ICT marketing, architecture, typesetting, software designing, hardware programming, digital recording, CCTV security services, and computer engineering, among several others. The understanding is that empowered with these professional skills, millions of unemployed Nigerians found jobs. At the same time, several other millions of Nigerians who were formerly unemployed also created jobs for millions of other Nigerians. Put together, these have gone a long way in reducing Nigeria's unemployment indexes, and equipped citizens with the economic capacity to contribute to nation building (Osuagwu, 2020; Umeh, 2020).

Effective Platform for Data Preservation

Armed with the facilities of the ICT too, Nigerians have gotten exposed to the technology of preserving their intellectual data on modern electronic devices whose durability and preservative quality are capable of withstanding all human-initiated errors and unfriendly weather conditions. With the aid of the infrastructures of the internet, CD rums, hard disk drives, software programmes, android mobile phones, IPADs, video recorders, digital recorders, CCTV cameras, among others, crucial data could be preserved for future use from one generation to the next. Preservation of data using the facilities of ICT-related technological devices is quite different from the colonial era of data storage which was basically made on dusty office files, while pens, pencils, and papers constituted the major materials in vogue (Danbatta, 2017).

Convergence of Global Minds: The internet, a crucial sector of the ICT industry, has no doubt constituted a huge hub for the convergence of global minds, entrepreneurs, researchers, and scientists of all sorts. As a critical umbrella of this industry, the internet, also known as the worldwide web provides adequate technological facilities that enhance effective communication, ensure delivery of top quality information, as well as create comprehensive digital forum for the sharing of information on divergent fields of human endeavour. In the words of SallaiGy (2012), in Danbatta (2017: 3), this digital era electronic infrastructure represents “the convergence of communication, information and media technologies, which are based on the common digital technology”, which includes the telecoms networks. Based on this understanding therefore, it leaves no one in doubt that the arrival of the internet facilities obviously revolutionized the ICT industry. Citing the reports of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), “seven billion people representing 95% of the world's population now live in an area covered by mobile-cellular networks”. It adds further that “ICT Facts and Figures 2016 reported that mobile-broadband of 3G LTE networks have grown to be available to almost 4 million people thereby enhancing the quality of internet use (Danbatta, 2017: 4). The implications of these developments are quite spectacular. At that, no one is left in any form of doubt that access to the internet promotes effective communication among clients from divergent locations across the globe, irrespective of the remoteness of such locations. Through the facilities of the internet too, crucial information which promote knowledge, support skills acquisition, minimize the amount of time usually spent on dangerous travels across cities and nations, reduce costs of procuring crucial data, as well as ensure the safe storage of data over a long period of time. The indication is that data stored on the internet are safer, properly protected, and better secured, with the implication that unnecessary loss of vital information through human failures and related factors becomes minimized. With these in focus, one can only add that access to this global forum creates wider platforms for the uninterrupted access to internet data to clients scattered around the global community.

Instrument for National Development: In the 21st century, adaptation to the infrastructures of the ICT has transformed human-related developmental strides across the globe. Supported with the facilities of this billion dollar industry, members of the global community have recorded tremendous developments in the various sectors of the economy which promote sustainable growth, scientific advancement, and infrastructural transformation. Aided with the professional skills required for the handling of various infrastructures of the ICT, which include computers, laptops, IPADs, digital cameras, photocopiers, android mobile phones, electronic digital recorders, scanners, CCTV cameras, noise-proof power generators, book binding machines, electronic calculators, CD-ROMs, video conferencing gadgets, e-mail facilities, internet cables, etc., Nigerians are able to perform productive roles, improve their earning capacities, and be able to contribute meaningfully to national development (Danbatta, 2017; Umeh, 2020). Along this line, the 21st century era in Nigeria has recorded millions of formerly unemployed youths who have employed themselves and others too. In various sectors of the economy, this group of Nigerians have contributed immensely in reducing unemployment among fellow citizens by giving them the opportunities to attend various training programmes which are designed to empower them with various professional skills which positively impact their capacity to contribute to national development. Thus, supported with lucrative professional skills, these men and women positively influence the earning capacities of fellow citizens, which at the long run arms them with the capacity to pay their taxes as at when due, and provide jobs for formerly unemployed Nigerians. By that, youth restiveness gets reduced. Criminality and violence among unemployed youths are minimized. Kidnapping for ransom and drug abuse are checkmated, while commitment to peace, unity, and continued existence of the nation as an indivisible entity remains sacrosanct among citizens (Onuoha, 2010; Iwunna, 2011). Putting these into context therefore, it can only be appreciated that Nigeria has witnessed some semblance of peace, stability, and infrastructural development since the past few years. Various democratic governments have made concerted efforts at improving the country's economic situations, scientific, and educational growth, as well as impacted the level of infrastructural development in parts of the country. The multi-pronged effects of these developments are diverse and have contributed immensely in multiple ways in the nation's march towards infrastructural and human capacity development. This, according to Danbatta (2017), is intended to push Nigeria to the next higher levels in the areas of infrastructural development and socio-economic development, all with the targets of improving the living conditions of citizens and entire residents of the country, irrespective of their diverse geographical locations and political affiliations.

Conclusion

At this stage, it is important to draw a few conclusions. Starting from the historic 1861 when Nigeria was formally colonized by the British government, bare laissez faire attitude was paid to Nigeria's education sector irrespective of the bountiful opportunities of growth which the nation's huge economic wealth provided. In the face of the British government's inattentiveness to Nigeria's development and most especially her education sector, a number of commissions were established in order to fashion out possible strategies to tackling the challenge. The extent to which the recommendations of those commissions were translated into practical reality remained a key issue. However, the bottom line remains that the British colonial education in Nigeria lacked those contents which offered citizens the opportunities of acquiring lucrative skills, emerging as entrepreneurs, as well as facilitated their chances of creating jobs for themselves and fellow citizens. The understanding is that armed with the lucrative skills which ICTs offer in the millennium era, Nigerians could be better positioned to contribute meaningfully to national development through jobs and wealth creation. Aided by the facilities of this huge industry, chances of detaching Nigeria from the ugly crutches of poverty, unemployment and criminality in the new millennium could become a reality soon.

The Way Forward

Towards decolonizing Nigeria's education sector from the influences of her former colonial masters therefore, there is urgent need to improve the curricula contents of the nation's educational system. Wider opportunities should be created for the inclusion of technology-based curricula contents which could empower recipients with lucrative skills and arm them with the ability to be employers of labour and wealth creators at the end of their careers. To that end, the era of attaining education in order to qualify for employment should be discouraged with impunity. Nigerian government could make this feasible through the inclusion of various tools of the ICT industry as major educational aids all through the nation's educational system.

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