



EMPOWERING NIGERIANS THROUGH THE DIGITAL NIGERIA PROGRAMME

The Nigerian government on Thursday, 26 March 2020 announced its plans to engage citizens in innovative digital knowledge acquisition from the comfort of their homes during this period of lockdown owing to the Coronavirus pandemic (a.k.a. COVID-19).

In a statement signed by Dr. Femi Adelayi, the Technical Assistant (Information Technology) to the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, it was stated that the initiative would empower innovators and entrepreneurs with skills required to thrive in the emerging digital economy¹.

What is a Digital Economy?

A digital economy is an economy that is based on digital computing technologies, although we increasingly perceive this as conducting business through markets based on the Internet and the World Wide Web. According to Thomas Mesenbourg, three main components of the 'Digital Economy' concept can be identified:

1. E-business infrastructure (hardware, software, telecom, networks, human capital, etc.),
2. E-business (how business is conducted, any process that an organization conducts over computer-mediated networks), and
3. E-commerce (transfer of goods, for example when a book is sold online).

It is widely accepted that the growth of the digital economy has widespread impact on the whole economy and various attempts at categorizing the size of the impact on traditional sectors have been made.

In 2012, Deloitte ranked six industry sectors as having a “short fuse” and to experience a “big bang” as a result of the digital economy. It means that for businesses to thrive in the future, they ought to have made plans for moving with the trend of digital economy. Institutions in finance, health and other sectors have been greatly affected by this wave of digitalization.

¹ <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/01/20/fg-ibm-sign-mou-for-digital-skill-development/> accessed on Sunday, April 5, 2020

The government in trying to equip the masses has institutionalized in conjunction with IBM, a system targeted at empowering entrepreneurs with skills required to thrive in this emerging digital economy.

To this end, the Honorable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy is introducing options for digital training. The platform will serve the purpose of keeping the masses busy and in the know of what to expect from the digital economy, and how to fit in during this trying COVID-19 pandemic period.

What does the platform have to offer?

According to the Government, the programme will enlighten interested entrepreneurs on such areas like:

1. Blockchain

Blockchain is a growing list of records, called blocks that are linked using cryptography. Each block contains a cryptographic hash of the previous block, a timestamp, and transaction data (generally represented as a Merkle tree).

By design, a blockchain is resistant to modification of the data. It is "an open, distributed ledger that can record transactions between two parties efficiently and in a verifiable and permanent way". For use as a distributed ledge, a peer-to-peer network, collectively adhering to a protocol for inter-node communication and validating new blocks, typically manages a blockchain. Once recorded, the data in any given block cannot be altered retroactively without alteration of all subsequent blocks, which requires consensus of the network majority.

Blockchain technology can be integrated into multiple areas. The primary use of blockchains today is as a distributed ledger for cryptocurrencies, most notably bitcoin. We believe that cryptocurrency would in the nearest future compete favourably with the paper cash system of transacting business.

2. Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI), sometimes called machine intelligence, is intelligence demonstrated by machines, in contrast to the natural intelligence displayed by humans and animals. Leading AI textbooks define the field as the study of "intelligent agents": any device that perceives its environment and takes actions that maximize its chance of successfully achieving its goals. Colloquially, the term "artificial intelligence" is often used to describe machines (or computers) that mimic "cognitive" functions that humans associate with the human mind, such as "learning"

and "problem solving". The course on AI will span across a general overview on AI, how it works, what makes a cognitive system different and case studies on the use of AI.

3. *Big data*

Big data is a field that treats ways to analyze, systematically extract information from, or otherwise deal with data sets that are too large or complex to be dealt with by traditional data-processing application software. Data with many cases (rows) offer greater statistical power, while data with higher complexity (more attributes or columns) may lead to a higher false discovery rate. Big data challenges include capturing data, data storage, data analysis, search, sharing, transfer, visualization, querying, updating, information privacy and data source. Big data was originally associated with three key concepts: volume, variety, and velocity. When we handle big data, we may not sample but simply observe and track what happens. Therefore, big data often includes data with sizes that exceed the capacity of traditional software to process within an acceptable time and value.

The platform will give a detailed insight on how emerging economies can benefit through the use of data.

While we commend the Government, we encourage every entrepreneur to make use of the opportunity to get enlightened on digital economy and how to develop their business interest through it. According to the press statement, to participate interested persons are advised to click on the link below - <https://developer.ibm.com/digitalnation/africa/>.

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