AUTHOR:
Mutendwahothe Walter Lumadi

AFFILIATION:
Department of Curriculum & Instructional Studies, University of South Africa

CORRESPONDENCE TO:
Mutendwahothe Walter Lumadi

POSTAL ADDRESS:
University of South Africa, College of Education, Department of Curriculum & Instructional Studies

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RETHINKING THE TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM THROUGH EQUITABLE QUALITY CURRICULUM FOR EMPOWERING THE MARGINALISED WOMEN IN EDUCATION

Abstract

This study was carried out to explore the impact of understanding the technology platform through equitable education. The technology space; through quality education; is a tool which empowers the marginalised women, with employable skills for better representation in higher education curriculum. A mixed method approach was employed in the study. A sample of three universities was drawn from a population of eight registered State universities in Cameroon. The following research instruments were used as a means to collect data; interviews, questionnaire and document analysis. The data collected was presented and analysed using, percentages, frequencies, the Pearson Moment Correlation and the Chi- Square (x^2) statistical test of independence. It became evident from the findings that the operations of women who did not understand the technology platform left much to be desired because they lacked employable skills. Moreover, they did not significantly impact on the growth of Cameroonian economy due to the numerous operational challenges faced by them over the years. Furthermore, it was also observed that a weak positive relationship existed between public policy support and women entrepreneurs in the country. This implies that, government initiatives and other support services have not assisted them surmount the inhibiting operational challenges. In order to help the unskilled women overcome their operational hardships, it is strongly recommended that among others, the following issues should be in place; relationship between understanding the technological space and female employability skills, capacity building initiatives on equitable quality education for all, provision of effective and realistic support services for marginalised women, promoting of gender neutral environment in all policy measures to help empowered women impact significantly on Cameroonian economic growth and stability.

Keywords: *Technology space, Equity, Quality curriculum, Empowerment, Marginalized women, Skills, Higher Education, Gender inequality*

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is a precondition for advancing development and alleviating poverty which is ravaging the world. Women who are empowered through equitable quality education contribute to the health and productivity of society. As technology advances, women have increasingly become targets of cyber- stalking and digital voyeurism, harassment, blackmail and threats. Cyber-harassment is a global phenomenon in every part of the world, but can pose an even greater threat in provinces where there are fewer provincial resources to educate people on its consequences. Women all over the world are entitled to live with dignity and with freedom from oppression and fear. Education is a key part of strategies to improve individuals' well-being and societies 'economic and social development. It unlocks constrains to enterprise and empower women to build a global community. They improve prospects for the next generation. Still despite solid evidence demonstrating centrality of women's empowerment to eradicate poverty,

promoting development and addressing the world's most challenges, gender equity remains an unfulfilled promise.

Gender equality is a human right issue. The WWW represents the internet which is the latest in communication technology. It can be threatening to both students and lecturers in a manner that it makes new demand and changes to expectations associated with traditional models. With the internet, educators and learners are able to have interactions not only in other parts of the country, but also around the world (Carree & Thurick, 2002 & Mbenja, 2010). The strength of the internet is that it provides an excellent platform where educational staff can collect information in multiple formats and then organize, link, and discover relationships between facts and events.

There is an indirect impact of internet and access to income, knowledge, education, etc. on self-confidence and self-esteem. The internet has an impact on empowerment, in changing relationships, in the families, in the learning milieu and in the development of every nation. Considering all the benefits of the internet, it is quite reasonable to consider how female staff in higher institutions who have acquired this skill cope with this phenomenon. We need to consider how it has helped them and how it can be of help to other women. It will be a good thing to learn from the experience of other women who have put their internet skills into practice. The benefits of the internet seem to be unknown, however, to the large majority of women entrepreneurs and women in general in Cameroon (Tetang, 2007). Cameroonian government actions to encourage the use of the Internet are embryonic and barely visible. The Internet is used by only 0.16 per cent of the population.

The level of higher education has an immediate impact on economic competitiveness and democratic development of the society (World Bank, 2000). The central role of higher education for development has been emphasized at various international conferences and in reports (UNESCO, 2000). In higher education, computer technology and the internet have enormous benefits including: access to cutting edge educational materials, flexible distance learning suitable to time-constrained women, enhancement of academic outcomes, and promotion of self-esteem and attainment of marketable skills. There have always been challenges of using ICTs in higher education for women's empowerment through training and access to physical facilities. Obstacles largely emanate from patriarchal, institutionalized work and programmatic ethics, limited physical ICT facilities as well as individual characteristics, perceptions and attitudes. Thus there is a great need for a Female ICT Breakout as proposed by Ndangle (2011c).

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK Understanding the Internet World

The internet provides an array of tools for acquiring information, thinking and expression. It allows students and staff more ways to enter the professional enterprise successfully and to live productive lives in the global, digital, and information-based future they all face. One of the frames through which the context needs to be understood is gender. Internet can provide access to resources and contribution to knowledge which will help in empowering women with employability skills better in higher institutions and consequently increase their number.

3. Empowering women with Employability Skills

The impact of internet skills has been felt by women entrepreneurs in Douala, Cameroon. Yitamben and Tchinda (2009), sort to find out whether women heads of enterprises use the Internet skills and access services provided through the multimedia centres of the Chamber of Commerce, and if yes for what purpose? These women, with their skills in this new technology have significantly reduced transaction costs and thus opened up entry

into the international market. If these women have somehow conquered the world trade in the textile sector through internet skills and use, other women just need to come to realize what they gain in acquiring such skills. No excuse should be given these days by women for not attaining higher educational level. If export of textile to Douala entrepreneur women is no longer reserved for large companies, then as far as this study is concerned, education especially at the tertiary level is no longer reserved for women who can find time to get to the classroom. The problem of women staying away from school because of other responsibilities can be solved through the understanding of the benefits of the internet. With more women attaining higher heights like graduating with Master and Doctoral degrees, their presence will be felt at the level of staff and why not at the level of appointments for posts of responsibility.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK The gender Schema Theory

The Gender schema theory underpins the study. It was formally introduced by Bem in 1981 as a cognitive theory to explain how individuals become gendered in society, and how sex-linked characteristics are maintained and transmitted to other members of a culture. Bem argues that there are individual differences in the degree to which people hold these gender schemata. These differences are manifested via the degree to which individuals are sex-typed. Bem explains how individuals come to use gender as an organizing category in all aspects of their life. She believed that through gender-schematic processing, a person spontaneously sorts attributes and behaviours into masculine and feminine categories. Therefore, an individual processes information and regulates behaviour based on whatever definitions of femininity and masculinity their culture provides.

5. The Feminist Standpoint Theory

To understand the feminist standpoint theory, it is imperative to look at what a standpoint is. According to Harding (2004), the concept of a standpoint employed in feminist standpoint theories takes a narrow meaning, owed to Marxist theory, according to which a standpoint is an achieved collective identity or consciousness. The establishment of a standpoint is the political achievement of those whose social location forms its starting point; it is not merely ascribed from beyond that location. There is a consensus among feminist standpoint theorists that a standpoint is not merely a perspective that is occupied simply by dint of being a woman. So while both the dominant and the dominated occupy perspectives, the dominated are much more successfully placed to achieve a standpoint. Whereas a perspective is occupied as a matter of the fact of one's socio-historical position and may well provide the starting point for the emergence of a standpoint, a standpoint is earned through the experience of collective political struggle, a struggle that requires, as Nancy Hartsock puts it, both science and politics (Schumpeter 1934 & Kpelai 2009). In the case of this study, the struggle requires women to understand the internet world for the better employability skills and better representation in higher education.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A sample of three universities was drawn from a population of eight registered State universities in Cameroon. Cameroon is subdivided into ten regions (North West, South West, West, Littoral, Centre, South, East, Adamawa, North and Far North). The study is intended to examine, explore and describe how an understanding of the benefits of the internet can contribute in developing the employability skills of women in higher institutions of learning in Cameroon and specifically in the Universities of Yaounde I, Douala and Bamenda. Yaounde, Douala and Bamenda are regional capitals of the Centre, Littoral and North West of Cameroon respectively. This research employed the case study method

which was thought to be the best because it will study a small number of cases to bring out the link between understanding the technology space and using this understanding to build female employability skills, which findings will be generalized to the higher institution population. The population of this study is therefore the female students and staff of the three selected universities. Following Piaget's concrete stage of development, where individuals can think concretely and rationally, reach out to make contact with others with the goal of choosing a career, female students and staff between the ages of 21 - 55 were the target population. The sample of this study is therefore the female students and staff of the University of Yaounde I, the University of Douala and the University of Bamenda. The researcher used the stratified random strategy and a sample was based on the experience of knowledge of the group to be sampled having in mind that these respondents have the information required. With this technique this researcher had 309 (210 students and 99 staff) respondents from the female students and staff in the Universities of Yaounde I, Douala and Bamenda. That is, 70 female students and 33 female staff from each institution, considering that female staff representation is low as realized during a previous research by Ndangle (2011). The instruments used for this study were: a questionnaire that was carefully designed for collecting data in accordance with the specifications of the research objective. For greater depths of responses to certain questions and some vital information that this researcher might have missed finding out, open ended questions were used. Closed – ended questions were also used for easy analysis of some information. Interviews were used to follow up certain respondents to questionnaires. These interviews helped the researcher bring in incidental comments, on-the-spot explanations, facial and bodily expressions, tone of voice, feelings and gestures into the data collected. Previous research and documents in this domain were also used as secondary data. The collected data were analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS13.0). The SPSS gave up values as well as calculated statistics. The data were presented in the form of tables to show the characteristics of the sample, and the statistical technique used was the chi-square (x2) test of independent and the Pearson Moment of Correlation. The chi-square test and the Pearson Moment of Correlation were the most appropriate in view of the nature of the data a relational study.

7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The ensuing presentation of results is organized following the research objective. The rating scale used for the research objective was made up of six response alternatives: strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), neither agree nor disagree (NAND), Agree (A), strongly agree (SA) and not relevant (NR). If export of textile to Douala entrepreneur women is no longer reserved for large companies, then education especially at the tertiary level is no longer reserved for women who can find time to get to the classroom (Yitamben and Tchinda, 2009). This must be the reason why more than a majority of the respondents being 39.1% strongly agreed and 24.1% agreed being able to send and receive e-mails and only 5.9% strongly disagreeing while 4.6% disagree of having this knowledge.

Table 1: Send and receive e-mail messages

Send and receive e-mail messages		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Strongly disagree	18	5,9
	Disagree	14	4,6
	Neither agree nor disagree	45	14,7
	Agree	74	24,1
	Strongly agree	122	39,1
	Not relevant	27	8,8
	Total	**298**	**97,1**
Missing	Missing system	9	2,9
Total		**309**	**100,0**

One of the data collection instruments was interviews as it was thought that some responses will not feature in the questionnaires. There was a need to get the opinions of the respondents even through facial expressions and body gestures. On the issue of the relationship that exist between women technological skills and their employability skills, one teacher remarked:

> *Being able to work on the internet today is a plus especially when any one is looking for a job. Most vacancies in organizations and institutions are advertised through Information and Communication Technology tools like the television and the internet sites of these institutions. So to begin with, if anybody does not know how to use the internet, there is a limitation. Also, when we deposit applications for jobs today, invitations for interviews are sent to us by mail, so you need to know how to go about in the internet. Again, most of us who are lecturers work with our students at a distance and this is thanks to the internet. We send them assignments and they send their work back to us through our mail boxes …*

Another lecturer shared the worries of Yitamben and Tchinda (2009), asking whether female leaders today use the internet and services provided through multimedia and all the rest of these wonderful opportunities put at their disposal. She exclaimed,

> *Do we really know the benefits that we can get from the effective use of these ICTs ?! Even some of us who have understood the power in ICTs still fail to use them effectively. We keep blaming others, we keep saying it has not been put at my disposal, I need to go to work and then get back home on time to take care of my family. Women should use the money they earn from the little they do, to buy laptops and internet connections for themselves. Let us stop waiting for « A » or « B » to come give us what we already have. I am what I am today because i understood this early and grasped the opportunity. As I told you, I am a Head of Department and I think I am succeeding because I have learnt how to manage my time even with the help of ICTs. I use the telephone to manage my home when I am out of it. When I am out of the country, I call, use the chat forums like Yahoo Messenger and Skype so my absence is just physical.*

Overall, participants of the sample believe that to find yourself up the decision making ladder, you need to be an ICT literate. They also hold that those of us who have understood the importance of Information and Communication Technologies should use every means put at our disposals to sensitize others on the strength we have found in the internet in particular and ICTs in general. With a total of 63.2% (24.1% agreed and 39.1% strongly agreed) of the respondents as seen on table 1 agreeing that they can send and receive e-mails, we can conclude that these female students and staff know the importance of the internet, they know it is a gateway to the world out there and to success in their professions. These findings give us reason to agree with Mbenja (2010) who professes that the strength of the internet is that it provides an excellent platform where educational staff can collect

information in multiple formats and then organize, link, and discover relationships between facts and events.

Mbenja's (2010) cry has certainly been heard as a great 46.9% strongly agree and 21.8% of these women are able to collect information in multiple formats, organize, get linked and certainly discover academic relationships as confirmed by our findings on the table below, by being able to access an internet site via its website address. We therefore have an encouraging total of 67.7% agreeing that they can access the internet sites via the website addresses. Only 3.9% of the respondents do not see the relevance of performing this task. 5.5% strongly disagree and 6.5% disagree of being able to access an internet site via its website address.

Table 2: Access an internet site via its website address and use search engines to find information

Access an internet site via its website address		Frequency	Percentage	Use search engines to find information	Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Strongly disagree	17	5,5	Strongly disagree	17	5,5
	Disagree	20	6,5	Disagree	11	3,
	Neither agree nor disagree	38	12,4	Neither agree nor disagree	44	14,3
	Agree	67	21,8	Agree	85	27,
	Strongly agree	146	46,9	Strongly agree	123	39,
	Not relevant	12	3,9	Not relevant	20	6,
	Total	**298**	**97,1**	**Total**	**298**	**97,**
Missing	Missing system	9	2,9	Missing system	9	2,
Total		**307**	**100,0**	**Total**	**307**	**100.0**

Analysing the data on table 2, we realize that the internet which provides access to resources and contribution to knowledge which will help in building female employability skills in higher institutions and consequently increase their representation is being used by the female students and staff of the three institutions selected for this study. One hundred and twenty three (123) of the three hundred and nine (309) respondents giving us 39.4% strongly agreeing and 27.7% agreeing that they can use search engines to find information.

Table 3: Download files from the internet and save text and images from web pages

Access an internet site via its website address		Frequency	Percentage	Use search engines to find information	Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Strongly disagree	14	4,6	Strongly disagree	14	4,6
	Disagree	23	7,5	Disagree	21	6,8
	Neither agree nor disagree	65	21,2	Neither agree nor disagree	52	16,9
	Agree	83	27,0	Agree	85	27,7
	Strongly agree	99	31,6	Strongly agree	97	30,9
	Not relevant	16	5,2	Not relevant	31	10,1
	Total	**298**	**97,1**	**Total**	**298**	**97,1**
Missing	Missing system	9	2,9	Missing system	9	2,9
Total		**309**	**100,0**	**Total**	**309**	**100.0**

One of our interesting findings disagree with Tetang (2007) who says despite the fact that Cameroonian government actions to encourage the use of the Internet are embryonic and barely visible and holding that the Internet is used by only 0.16 per cent of the population and that objectives in telecommunications and ICT have either not been achieved or are experiencing considerable delays. This does not hold with the population as proven by the data in table 3. 30.9% strongly agree and 27.7% agree that they can effectively save text and images that they get from their internet searches.

Referring the qualitative data through face to face interviews on the question of downloading files from the internet and saving text and images gotten from internet search, one of our respondents asserted that:

> *It will be pedagogically, didactically and administratively unacceptable to have a university lecturer who does not know how to search the net for information, who does not know how to save the text or images she has gotten from the internet in either her desktop, laptop, of any other mobile device.*

More than a majority of our interviewees expressed the view of this respondent who continued by asking us these series of questions:

> *What will a lecturer who does not know how to perform this task teach? Where will she get resources to prepare her lectures? Will she have to call somebody to help her copy and save text and images that she finds during her search every time she does one? I think you and I know the answers to these questions. Anybody especially women who aspire to teach or work in the university must acquire these skills. The days when they used to fool us that ICT is meant for men are gone. We can use them to catch up the time lost, to bridge the gender gap in all employment sectors and especially in the university here where women drop out or do not even enrol because of domestic responsibilities.*

Table 4: Summary of Research Findings: Using the Pearson Moment Correlation on Internet skills and employability skills Correlation

	Internet skills	Employability skills
Internet skills	1	,019
Pearson Correlation		,750
Sig. (2-tailed) N	296	293
Employability skills	,019	1
Pearson Correlation	,750	
Sig. (2-tailed) N	293	295

Model Summary and Parameter Estimates Dependent Variable: Employability skills

Equation	Model Summary					Parameter Estimates	
	R Square	F	df1	df2	Sig.	Constant	b1
Linear	,000	,102	1	291	,750	25,191	,010

The independent variable is Internet skills.

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis (r)shows that here the correlation is .019. The P value or T test(Sig. - 2-Tailed), here is .750. The result .019 shows the degree of link that exists between the dependent and the independent variable. This signifies that the relation between X et Y positively correlated; when X grows (or diminishes), Y diminishes (or grows). In this light, the correlation is positively stronger. The relationship is there but strong. There is a correlation between internet skills and employability skills.

Using the Chi-Square Test of Independence on understanding the Internet world and employability skills.

Table 5: Case processing summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Internet skills * Employability skills	293	95,4%	14	4,6%	307	100,0%

Internet skills * Employability skills Cross-tabulation

Count

	Employability skills																				
	7	13	14	15	17	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	34	35	
Internet	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
23,00	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
skills																						
24,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
27,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
29,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
30,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
33,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
34,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
36,00	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
38,00	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
39,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	4
40,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	5
41,00	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
42,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	8
44,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
46,00	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
47,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
48,00	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	4	0	0	0	0	17
49,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
50,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	5	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
51,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
52,00	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
53,00	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
54,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	7	0	5	0	10	0	10	0	0	0	0	37

Table 6: Chi-Square Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2652,204[a]	760	,000
Likelihood Ratio	1012,477	760	,000
Linear-by-Linear Association		1	,749
N of Valid Cases	,102 293		

a. 817 cells (99,8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,00.

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal Contingency Coefficient	,949	,000
N of Valid Cases	293	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Concerning Internet skills and employability skills, it can be noted that, the chi square calculated is 2652, the degree of freedom (Df) is 760, combining this with α (standard deviation), we obtain the chi square root which is 762.6. This shows that the chi square calculated is greater than the chi square read. It means that there is a link between Internet skills and employability skills. The link here is very strong since the contingency coefficient (CC) is .949.

8. Confirmation of findings with theories

The findings confirm Bem's (1981), Gender Schema Theory as we see the degree to which higher institutions of learning have become sex-typed. Gender being used as an organizing category in society is well reflected here as we find in the low female representation of female students and staff in higher institutions of learning being the outcome of gender gaps in most areas of life and particularly in education.

Bem (1981) decided to measure how well women fit into their traditional gender roles in society just as this study also decided to find out how well women will fit into positions of responsibility in higher institutions of learning if a female ICT breakout takes place. According to her sex role inventory, you can only fit well in your traditional gender role following the characteristics of your personality as masculine, feminine, or undifferentiated. Our findings show that female students and staff of the University of Yaounde

1, the University of Douala and the University of Bamenda have sorted their attributes and behaviours just according to what society says about them and as such, have failed to understand and exploit the benefits of the internet in improving on their skills for more employments just as the Gender Schema Theory states.

One concurs with Bem who believes that through gender-schematic processing, a person

spontaneously sorts attributes and behaviours into masculine and feminine categories which leads to process information and regulate behaviour based on whatever definitions of femininity and masculinity their culture provides. By categorizing themselves in this domain, it is therefore not surprising to have the low female representation in higher institutions of learning. A Female ICT Breakout is hereby urgently called for if this situation must be addressed. These women need to come out, fight the femininity and masculinity cultural divides, use the internet to train themselves and improve on their employability skills for better income and representation in decision making positions that will lead to better development.

There is an indirect impact of the internet and access to income, knowledge and education on self – confidence and self – esteem. To substantiate on this, we focus our lens on the Feminist Standpoint Theory of Harding (2004) where he argued that the oppressed slave can eventually reach a state of freedom of consciousness as a result of the realization of self-consciousness through struggles against the master, and via involvement through physical labour in projects that enable one to fashion the world—to affect it in various ways. This argument of Harding (2004) ties with the findings that female staff in higher institutions of learning possess and do use internet skills. Gathering from qualitative data, they own e-mail addresses, send instant messages, and use various websites for various reasons. These female staff gained self-consciousness and reached the state of freedom from their master (socio-cultural) barriers (Haskin & Targat 2001), like the slaves used by (ibid) in his theory analysis. After gaining self-consciousness, these women through physical labour like acquiring internet skills and putting them into practice in educational projects have climbed the educational ladder as we got from one of them arguing,

> *I obtained a master's degree through an online course. If I did not have the necessary skills it would have been almost impossible because I had to take care of my home, my husband, children and other social activities. I used my palmtop anywhere I was. I just needed to withdraw a little from any distraction in order to connect to my classroom. If I could do this, and one of my colleagues is currently doing the same thing through my advice, then I think there is no barrier to women improving on the employability skills at the university level.*

Some of them have attained positions that make them proud and able to counsel those who have not yet realized what internet skills can bring to them. Few of them are in positions where they can take decisions that fashion their nation and world. Women are in the position to analyse and understand their problems better than men as one of them mentioned,

> *I think women should also wake up to the reality that the internet is solving so many problems in our society today. The internet has opened so many doors and will continue to do so. If they could use this tool to search for husbands abroad then they should also use it to further their education. We have done so, it has worked for us and can also work for all women. But unfortunately, they fear to touch it. In any case, I think that women who already have a certain level of education are willing to use this tool. I remember I had to build up courage to start manipulating the computer because I was told this high technology can be best manipulated only by men. I was told to always look for a cyber café if I had anything to do with the internet. Today I manipulate the computer and work in the internet with all confidence. I can say that is what has brought me to this level in life.*

If all women or a majority of them could follow the example and counsel of those who, through hard work and perseverance have made it, then the future is brighter for the female folk. They will be seen working hard to improve on their employability skills. Their number will also increase in higher institutions of learning; decision making positions; and all of these will lead to a better development for the nation.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The relationship tested in this study underscores the multiplicity of the factors which influence the operations of rethinking the technology platform through equitable quality curriculum for empowering the marginalised women in institutions of higher learning. It evolved from the findings that women entrepreneurs have not contributed significantly to the economic growth of the country due to numerous operational challenges experienced over the years. The public policies support put in place have not helped them either to overcome or surmount these challenges. Women entrepreneurs have potentials to create employment opportunities, create wealth for the world and generally grow the economy. Therefore if the economic status of the country is improved through e d u c a t i o n a n d entrepreneurial development, the socio-economic well-being will be attained.

With limited information on the strengths of internet skills, women might remain in their marital homes as house wives, fail to continue education, record an insignificant number of staff in higher institutions, and fail to participate in decisions that even affect their lives and nation in general. Yitamben and Tchinda (2009), found out that some female entrepreneurs in Douala used their internet skills to reduce transaction cost and thus opened up entry into the international market of African design clothing. These women benefited from their internet skills to make export become an issue no longer reserved for large companies. The empowered women in this study, as our findings show, have used their internet skills to build their learning capacities, attain administrative positions, policy decision taking positions and nation builders. They can also be considered as role models in society.

Excuses must be wiped out by women if they consider employability skills as a pre-requisite to self-confidence, professional development and national development. Role models can make a change. Women who have nursed negative impressions about their educational lives, have remained in the minority in higher institutions of learning. It was noted that some efforts have been made by government to provide internet services for female staff in higher institutions of learning. These female staff use the internet services in their offices profitably. On the other hand, it was also gathered from interviews that some of the female staff do not use ICTs and particularly the free internet services put at their disposal. They claim to be technophobic holding that this information and communication technologies are better manipulated by men. Believes like this one need therefore to be wiped out through individual and government efforts and through a female ICT breakout.

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