



RESEARCH ARTICLE

INTEGRATION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN TEACHING AND LEARNING RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The need to integrate information and communication Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning religious studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions in this digital age cannot be underscored. The use of ICT in Religious studies, no doubt, will enhance both students' academic performance and lecturers' pedagogic skills thereby reposition the course as one of the value laden courses in our tertiary institutions. This paper, therefore, takes a concise look at the concept of information and communication technology (ICT); the use of ICT in education; application of ICT in teaching and learning Religious studies and benefits of the application of ICT in teaching and learning Religious studies. It also goes ahead to examine the challenges to the application of ICT to teaching and learning religious studies. The paper concludes by emphasizing the far-reaching impact of ICT on students' academic performance as well as on lecturers' pedagogic skills, arguing that any academic discipline where ICT is yet to be integrated is pathetically lagging behind in this digital age. The paper, thus, suggests among other things, that the government should come up with strategic funding plans to revamp our moribund tertiary education system, especially in the area of digitalization through establishment of e-libraries and provision of internet facilities and personal computers (PCS) to various tertiary institutions to enable students, especially Religious studies students, to have easy access to ICT mediated studies.

Keywords: Religious studies, ICT, Teaching learning, Nigeria, tertiary Institutions.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

The capacity of information and communication technology (ICT) to reposition and revolutionize the study of religious studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions when integrated into its classroom teaching and learning process cannot be underestimated. Advanced countries of the world have begun to enjoy the overarching benefits of ICT since the post-world war 11, when they saw the need to employ its use for the enhancement of labour productivity in work places (Sayed & Gordon, 2020:1). Since then, ICT revolution has continued to diffuse to all parts of the globe with great rapidity, having its tentacles unflinchingly extended to all facets of human endeavours, including education.

ICT has ushered us into the new world order of unremitting flow of knowledge, where enquiry about everything is made with ease and adequately too and where things are done with unprecedented efficiency and creativity. As observed by Ezike and Egbule 2015:128), the new world order of ICTs has drastically altered the norms and paradigms of the social order, bringing in its wake an entirely new way of seeing and doing things. ICT has, indeed, redefined educational efficiency and effectiveness in many countries that fully incorporated it into their classroom teaching and learning process (Adebule, 2009:142).

Educational goals of religious studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions can be maximally realized with the integration of ICT into its study. The introduction of ICT into the study of Religious studies as an academic discipline will invariably change the way its teaching and learning are conducted. It can lay a solid base on the path for a new pedagogical approach, where students are expected to play more active role than before (Ezike & Egbule, 2015, p.128). The innovative approach enhances the learning experience by providing students and lecturers with access to diverse religious perspectives and scholarly materials (Musa & Olowo, 2024, p.1).

The current status of religious studies in our tertiary institutions characterized by low students' patronage, poor students' enrollment in the departments of Religious studies, low self-esteem on the path of students and lecturers, lack of current text books and other study materials for the course and so on, will certainly change for the better if ICT is integrated into the study. ICT can significantly boost students and lecturers ego by connecting them to other



scholars of Religious studies around the globe through certain internet platforms like virtual classroom, zoom conference, e-learning apps, among others, so as to help them know that they are not alone in their study area (Religious studies). It will also provide them with the most current and relevant study materials as well as innovations in teaching and learning of religions studies.

Unfortunately information and communication technology (ICT) and its multifarious resources are yet to be fully integrated in teaching and learning of religious studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions due to a number of challenges. It is against this backdrop that this paper sees the need to examine integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning religious studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

2.0. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Information and communication Technology

ICT is an innovation in information processing system. It comprises a large number of different tools and technologies that extend beyond conventional computing and website development. ICT encompasses a synergistic amalgamation of physical components such as hardware, software, media and delivery systems. (Odey, Okafor, Eneji & Ekpenyong, 2024). ICT came about from the combination of two separate but related entities-information technology (IT) and communication. Information Technology (IT) entails the mechanism of handling information, which includes the collection, storage, processing and use of information.

Communication is the process of sharing meaning, experiences, thoughts, ideas, opinions and pieces of information from one person to the other (Ezike & Egbule, 2015, p. 129). Communication is at the backbone of information as any information without communication is meaningless and useless. The combination of information technology (IT) with communication resulted to an integrated package of data gathered organized, processed, stored, retrieved and made available to users. It is this combination that led to the emergence of information and communication technology (ICT) (Ezike & Egbule, 2015, p. 129). ICT, thus encompasses the broad range of mechanism for management and dissemination of information. It involves hardware, software and the networks that enable communication and data management in a more complex and connected ways.



2.2. The use of ICT in Education

The introduction of ICT into the classroom, different academic programs and diverse educational settings all over the world in the recent times has greatly revolutionized the education system. As observed by Ratheeswari (2018,p. 545), though ICT is influencing all aspects of life, its influences are more at schools. ICT provides both students and lecturers with more opportunities in adapting learning and teaching to individual needs. The introduction of ICT into education is expected to improve the quality of education through high-quality digital teaching materials and individual optimization of learning contents. It also improves learning efficiency and reduces the burden on teachers (learning box, 2022). The implementation of various software applications and methodologies through ICT are believed to have the capacity to enhance the quality and effectiveness of education. Such implementation seeks to streamline instructional practices, making them more accessible and effective for all stakeholders irrespective of place or location and time.

There are so many ICT tools that are used in education today. One of the most outstanding ones among them is the most computer managed instruction (CMI). Computer managed instruction uses computer to organize curricular and students' data /monitor students progress, diagnose and evaluate learning outcomes as well as provide planning information for teachers (Ezike & Egbule, 2015, p 133).

Another tools is computer assisted instruction (CAI). In using Computer Assisted Instruction, the student or learner interacts with and is guided by a computer through a course of study geared towards the achievement of certain instructional goals. This ICT tool helps to implement and apply a teacher or lecturers teaching and learning experience thereby making learning interactive and dynamic (Hauruo, Ya & Jiuren 2023). Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) can be used in so many ways as in provision of practice with concept and skills, provision of feedback to students and accessing students learning (Mehta, 2023, p.1).

E-learning is also another ICT tool widely used in education today. It involves learning at all levels, both formal and non-formal, using information network or the internet for course delivery, facilitation, evaluation and or interaction. In a nutshell, e-learning is a web-based



learning or an online learning that uses internet browser such as chrome, firefox, internet explorer (Ezile & Egbule, 2015, p 133).

Another important ICT tool widely used in education is quizlet. Quizlet is part of Artificial Intelligence (AI) study tool that supports students' learning through the use of flashcards, games and tests. This tool makes the study of different courses in tertiary institutions easier and more engaging (Asu Prep Global, 2024)

Edpuzzle is another ICT tool that has helped students all over the world to improve their learning outcomes. It is a creative digital tool for lecturers or teachers to transform any video into an interactive lesson without difficulty. It helps lecturers/teachers to source online videos or use their own and then add voice-overs, notes and questions to engender a well-packaged learning program for students (Asu prep Global, 2024).

Another vital ICT tool used in education is the padlet. The Padlet, according to Asu prep Global (2024), is designed like a digital bulletin board where lecturers and students can post images, notes, links and videos. It facilitates sharing and collecting ideas, views and opinions on any topic, making the classroom learning environment more collaborative.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

This study employed secondary search methodology assessing ICT as emerging teaching and learning technique in Religious and Cultural Studies in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. The author drew extrapolate some contemporary literature and presented a balance qualitative discussions thematically using discourse analysis as presented in the subsections that follow.

4.0. LITERALLY DISCOUSES AND RESULTS

4.1. Application of ICT in Teaching and Learning Religious Studies

The need for the adoption of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning religious studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions has become so compellingly pressing that immediate action should be taken by our religious educators, especially now that the course is begging for revitalization in our tertiary institutions.

The use of ICT generally makes teaching and learning of Religious studies easy, convenient as well as flexible and provides personalized instruction with immediate feedback. Computer



assisted teaching (CAT) when applied to religious studies will help teachers/lecturers to present instructional materials in an active mode to provide and control the individualized learning environment for each individualized student. It works best with drills, practices, and tutorials (Ezike & Egbule, 2015, p. 133).

E-Learning or online learning uses the internet to study religious study. With the application of internet browser like chrome, firefox, internet explorer and so on, it opens access for learners and lecturers to different aspects of information and knowledge on religious studies. As observed by Musa and Oluwo (2024), e-learning offers students a broader understanding of religious concepts, history, contemporary issues as well as scholarly articles.

Power-point as an ICT tool has gained much popularity and wide acceptability among people in the professional and educational world. Teachers and students use power-point in so many ways today, which include slideshows, presentation of research findings, lecture notes display, display of various students' works, picture display and posting and so on (Meghan, 2004), p. 27). In the same vein, it can be used in the study of religious studies by both students and lecturers in the department in diverse ways. It can be used in classroom lecture delivery, seminar presentations, display of religious pictures and artifacts and so on.

The digital tool quizlet, which can be easily accessed via its website or its apps using android phones or internet linked computers, provides numerous study modes to students at any level or lecturers wishing to augment their study materials. It can be used also to learn, write, spell and match; as well as for quizzes, games, flashcards and can be connected to a wide range of topics in religious studies through study links created by an array of different users worldwide (Asu Prep Global, 2024).

Edpuzzle is another ICT tool that can be integrated in the study of religious studies to enhance its teaching and learning in our digital age. Edpuzzle is accessible with its website using any mobile browser or any desktop and android devices. It makes room for an interactive and virtual approach to learning through the application of animated video contents, customized video and voice notes blended with relevant questions to facilitate students understanding of religious studies lessons (Asu Prep Global, 2024).



Another ICT tool that will help teaching and learning of religious studies when integrated into it, is the “Storybird”. This is a creative digital platform that provides users the opportunity to craft, share as well as access diverse stories relevant to subjects of study through art and writing. This platform that is accessed through google play store and Ios app store can help both students and lecturers of religious studies to compose their religious stories, narratives or create an inspiring story books which are shared at online community and also receive immediate feedback (ASU. Prep Global, 2024).

4.2. Benefits of the Application of ICT in Teaching and Learning Religious Studies

The adoption of various ICT tools in teaching and learning religious studies creates room for effective and result-oriented teaching and learning via provision of access to modern, current, and ample study materials to both teachers/lecturers and students of religious studies. ICT tools facilitate flexibility in learning environments. Application of ICT tools can help students learn at their own pace and schedule (Musa & Olowo, 2024).

It has the capacity to enhance students’ ability to assimilate, digest and regurgitate various pieces of information presented to them at different times (Ogunyemi, 2021, p. 53). The ability of students to recall or remember what they were taught over a long period of time is a sure way to sound academic performance in all ages. As observed by Adetunji (2020), a large number of students will be motivated to excel in their performance and retain or recall what they have read with a faster pace when an oral presentation is accompanied by virtual aids or concrete objects that can be seen, touch or manipulated by hands.

The introduction of ICT in teaching and learning of religious studies, no doubt, can reposition its study in our tertiary institutions by enhancing educational outcomes and making learning more engaging. It can create a dynamic learning environment characterized by interactions and immediate feedback, thereby making the study of religious studies more appealing and impactful (Odey, Okafor, Eneji & Ekpenyong, 2024, p. 9). ICT can guarantee a vital and easily accessible asset for students and lecturers, including those with exceptional requirements by providing them with diverse educational aids (Ogunjimi, 2022).

ICT in religious studies can boost collaboration among different students and even lecturers from different environments, locations and academic backgrounds. It is an effective distance



learning tool for seamless integration of learners from far and near. ICT tool like virtual classroom, video conferencing can form a rallying point for both students and lecturers of religious studies, helping them to work better together (Musa & Olowo, 2024, p. 87).

It provides a convenient platform for organizing and delivering course content. By taking advantage of this platform, lecturers can create structured online environments for better coordination of students programs, assessment and provision of timely feedback on students' performance. Features such as quizzes, discussion forums, assignment submission and so on can be effectively harnessed to help students to enhance their performance in religious studies (Musa & Olowo, 2024, p. 87). ICT makes it very easier and quicker to disseminate information, cover wide range of students or learners than the traditional face to face learning or sharing of information to students in a classroom.

The introduction of various ICT tools in the study of religious studies has the capacity to enhance students cognitive abilities by facilitating higher level thinking, problem solving, improve interactive and communication abilities, as well as facilitate an in-depth understanding of various teaching methods and their possible impacts on teaching and learning process (Sutton, 2006).

A digital tool like padlet can aid lecturers and students of religious studies to engage in cross-collaboration on, or discussion of various topics, videos, images, texts and exchange ideas and information through the creation of a dynamic virtual space (ASU Prep Global, 2024).

ICT tools in general enhance lecturers' pedagogical efficiency. They help lecturers to easily create, store and access lesson plans, worksheets and relevant instructional materials on religious studies. This ICT-mediated approach saves time, resources and efforts compared to traditional method of depending on physical copies (ASU Prep Global, 2024).

The use of google classroom, zoom classroom, whatsapp, e-mail and related Apps to teach and learn religious studies can guarantee safety and health of both lecturers and students in time of crisis, insecurity, pandemic and harsh weather conditions, when physical contacts becomes extremely difficult, or poses a serious health challenge. During the Covid-19 pandemic online studies became the only way out of the perceived health hazard associated with physical contacts of students and lecturers (Gana & Ajibola, 2023).



4.3. Challenges to the Application of ICT to Teaching and learning Religious Studies

Although the use of ICT in teaching and learning religious studies is associated with a number of benefits, so many factors have continued to make its wide usage in some institutions difficult. Among such factors is high cost of ICT materials. As observed by Saha (2023), ICT implementation in educational institutions involves huge financial expenses to afford large infrastructure, hardware, software, subscription for various app and internet browsing data. Most tertiary institutions find it difficult to adopt the use of ICT in classroom teaching and learning because of its high cost.

Similarly, greater number of religious studies students is from indigent homes and hence could not easily afford personal computers (pcs), laptops, smart phones, tablets and sometimes internet browsing data and this impinges on their chances of using ICT as well as being efficient in its use in learning religious studies.

Most religious studies lecturers are not computer-literate and this often develops into phobia for the integration of ICT in handling religious studies lectures. This also leads some to develop what Adebayo (2020) describes as resistance to technology change. According to him, some educators resist adoption of new technologies due to lack of training and familiarity with ICT Platforms (Adebayo, 2020, p. 51).

The above challenge – ‘lecturers/educators resistance to change from traditional teaching methodologies’ has continued to complicate the acceptance of new technology-driven approaches (Makdee, Boontarig & Puttasomsri, 2023, p. 305). Some lecturers are fond of kicking against all forms of suggestions for personal upgrade in the use of computer assisted teaching (CAT) in handling religious studies in the classroom.

The government inadequate funding of tertiary education system, politicization of education budget as well as unwillingness to digitalize all our tertiary institutions through the supply of internet facilities, personal computers (pcs), building of e-libraries, and well-equipped ICT centres have remained major snags in the adoption of ICTs in teaching and learning of different courses in our tertiary institutions.



5.0. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1. Conclusion

The fact that every aspect of human life is now technology-driven is no longer controvertible. The integration of ICT into our educational system to facilitate efficiency and effectiveness in its overall outcomes has continued to receive global acceptance. ICT has revolutionized our educational system, and ushered us into the new world order of unlimited possibilities where everything is made easy and all information accessed with unprecedented rapidity and efficiency. ICT has far-reaching impacts on students' academic performance as well as lecturers' pedagogical skills.

The integration of ICT into the study of religious studies in our tertiary institutions will surely redefine reinvigorate and enhance its teaching and learning and also lay a solid base on the path for a new pedagogical approach, where students are expected to be more actively involved than before. Any academic discipline where ICT is yet to be integrated today is pathetically lagging behind in this digital age and therefore needs urgent upgrading.

5.2. Suggestions

In order to ensure that the challenges facing the application of ICT to teaching and learning religious studies in our tertiary institutions are overcome, this paper makes the following suggestions:

1. The government should come up with strategic funding plans to revamp our moribund tertiary education system, especially in the area of digitalization through provision of internet facilities, personal computers (PCS) creation of worldwide webs, establishment of e-libraries and ICT centres in various institutions to enable students, especially religious studies students, to have easy access to ICT-mediated studies.
2. Lecturers/educators in religious studies department should stop resisting the introduction of ICT in teaching and learning religious studies in our tertiary institutions.
3. The government should team up with the school management to ensure that regular workshops, seminars, training programs for lecturers and non-academic staff in the



Department of religious studies, are organized to help them get themselves updated in the use of ICT and its various tools in classroom teaching and learning process.

4. Similarly, the government should increase its budgetary allocation for education sector in line with the acceptable or recommended global standard of 26% of its annual budget. This will ensure that education, especially at the basic level, is well funded, all over the country.
5. Parents should support as well as encourage their children to be ICT- compliant by providing them with smart phones and internet browsing data.

Competing Interest

The author declares that no conflicting interest exist in this study

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