# THE INTEGRATION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN THE TEACHING OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

The paper examined the integration of information and communication technology in the teaching of Christian Religious Studies. Attempt was made to clarify key concepts like information and communication technology, Christian Religious Studies and integration. It was discovered that ICT is an indispensable tool in the field of general education, and if integrated in the teaching of CRS. It can be used by teachers can use it to improve lesson design, transform teaching and learning process as well as engage and motivate students to learn effectively. Students on the other and can use ICT to access information on the internet, send email to their teachers and do their assignments with ease among other factors that were identified. The study also discovered that teachers' lack of exposure to ICT, lack of funds, lack of space to accommodate ICT materials and technical knowhow are some of the challenges bedeviling the integration of ICT in religious studies. Suggestions such as the need for government to sink in money for the implementation of ICT in schools, the need for training of teachers and the need for befitting curriculum for teaching ICT in schools were given as recommendations.

**Keywords:** Integration, Information and Communication Technology. Christian Religious Studies

## Introduction

Christian Religious Studies (CRS) is one of the government's approved subjects to be taught in Nigeria's secondary schools. It is one of the optional subjects in the National Policy of Education (NPE, 2004). It is the hope of government that the teaching of the subject would provide more opportunity for Nigerian youths to know more about God and develop their faith in God, enable the youths; to accept Christ as their saviour and redeemer, prepare the youth for higher education, develop in the youths Christian attitudes and moral values such as humility, respect, love, kindness, justice, fair play, spirit of forgiveness, obedience, orderly behavior or discipline, hard work and devotion to duty, selfless service to God and humanity, among others FGN (2010).

Despite the importance of the subject in bringing a turnaround in the character of students, the methodology of teaching the subject has largely remained the traditional methods of storytelling, discussion, question and answer, project method, inquiry methods and dramatization. This has made the teaching and learning of the subject inefficient to attract both teachers and students.

Consequent to the fact that government places premium on the teaching of Christian Religious Studies as an instrument for societal transformation, and as a means for the attainment of national development, every effort should be made at improving its teaching. It is against this background that the integration of information and communication technology is advanced as a needed panacea. The integration of ICT in the teaching of CRS would help students and teachers to have practical knowledge of the computer, and to be able to access and navigate global network on their own. Manuel (2008) noted that this would help them get updated information about their various areas of studies, thereby launching them into the global village where every human activity is computerized.

## Conceptualization of ICT Integration and Christian Religion Education

Information and Communication Technology (ICT), has been seen and defined in several ways. Yusuf in Osakwe (2012) sees ICT as an electronic technology used for accessing, processing, gathering, manipulating, presenting and communicating information. He emphasizes that when ICTs are employed in education, they can accelerate, enrich and deepen basic skills in reading, writing, arithmetic and the sciences, besides motivating and encouraging students to learn as they become more independent and responsible for their learning. According to Obanya (2002) information and communication technology is a broad concept that has to do with the harnessing of the process, the methods and products of electronic and communication technologies (and other related resources in today's knowledge driven society), for enhancing the availability, spread and efficiency of a set of programmed activities geared towards the achievement of clearly defined goals. Wertlen in Musingafi and Chaden'anga (2014) define Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a general term that describes any technology that helps to produce, manipulate, store, communicate, and/or disseminate information. Siraj-Blatcford and Siraj-Blatchford (2003) define it as anything which allows us to get information, to communicate with each other, or to have an effect on the environment using electronic of digital equipment.

Christian Religion according to the Christian Council of Nigeria, Institute and Church Society Ibadan, in lwenofu (2010), is a process which seeks to convey the truths of the Christian faith to individuals so meaningfully that they will become Christian disciples and be built up to do the will of God in every relationship at home, in the church, in the society at large, and within the changing situations of each generation. Christian religious education according to Ilori (2005) is education that desires to establish the gospel in the hearts and minds and social life of the people, so that truth and righteousness may flourish among them. Makpu (2011) defines Christian education as the education that develops and brings to

maturity the powers, skills, attitudes and capacities of growing and maturing personalities. As a form of education, it seeks to re-organize, re-integrate and re-energize or redirect the child.

The divine mandate for Christian education was made by God to parents in Deuteronomy 6:7 that in all they do, they should provide godly education to their children. The aim of which is to direct the child to his Creator and prepare him for service to God and humanity.

Integration according to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009), is the combining of two or more things so that they work together effectively. In this context, integration has to do with incorporating information and communication technology materials, devices and ideas to better the teaching of Christian Religious Studies.

## Integration of ICT in Education

The importance of education to every nation cannot be underestimated. In Nigeria, education is a societal process of cultural transmission, by which values, attitudes, beliefs and cultural practices are transmitted from one generation to the other. It is in an effort to enhance its sustainability that the need for the integration of ICT arose. The growth of the computer industry has sky-rocketed over the years, making tremendous impact on the educational sector, as many schools are now equipped with computers for educating students, thereby making computers an integral part ofthe education system.

With ICT, teachers now use computers for teaching, giving presentations, assessing various data banks, maintaining data base of students, communicating in the form of emails or chats, browsing the internet and preparing and equipping students with the reality and integrity to have a competitive edge in the global job market (Zynsheng, 2010). ICT use in education can also promote students' intellectual qualities through higher order thinking, problem solving, improved communication skills, and deep understanding of the learning tool and the concepts taught. It can also promote supportive, interactive teaching and learning, create broader

learning opportunities, including for those with special needs (Trivnidad 2001).

Isiorhovoja and Osajie (2012) added the fact that ICT usage can also improve attendance levels and enable the creation of a new and more effective curriculum This according to Zynsheng (2010) is a major revolution in teaching and learning, because with ICT, students can watch films in different subject areas, and experience great, sound and excellent picture quality and commentaries on compact disc or DVDs as well as from the internet. It is in line with the importance ICT provides in education that a case is made for its incorporation in the teaching and learning of Christian Religion Studies (CRS).

## Integration of Information Communication Technology in the Teaching of Christian Religion Education

The integration of Information and Communication Technology in the teaching of Christian Religious Studies is a nascent development. Aikonen (2012) maintained that the usage of ICT and nets in Religious Studies came late in the 1990s, with very little interest shown by churches, students and religious instructors. With this incorporation, ICT has become a useful tool in the teaching and learning of Christian Religious Studies today.

Starichentov (2013) observed that computers and information technologies have penetrated almost all spheres of life, without passing by religion education. The integration of which has helped not only to increase the efficiency of religion education system, but also to make it more understandable and interesting for modem man and especially the youth. He noted further that the integration of ICT in religion education opens up unprecedented opportunities for downloading textbooks from universities servers through the internet, sending in homework by email, and online, e-conferences, taking examinations online, adjusting to individual study pace and also making educational aids and other materials available to ensure the smooth running of the educational process. This device if properly utilized

by CRS teachers and students, will no doubt make the teaching and learning of CRS result oriented in institutions of learning.

Isiorhovoja and Osajie (2011) averred that the integration of ICT in Christian religion education will provide the following:

(a) Support teachers to improve lesson design to transform the teaching and learning process as well as to engage and motivate learners more effectively. Examples include the projection of the topographical map of Palestine for pupils to visualize during instruction.

(b) Provide opportunities for pupils to learn in alternative and challenging ways, using a wide range of sources of information and techniques to support critical thinking. This includes online lessons/exercises for pupils to interact with the next class.

(c) Support both collaborative and individual work. A pupil in Greek language class for example, can replay the audio cassette or video cassette to assist in gaining mastery of the language as well as the right pronunciation as a foreign language.

(d) Allow pupils the opportunity to access the sources of information relevant to a particular enquiry by researching websites on the internet. The ability of the pupils to go for further information will not only boost their knowledge, but will further enable them to gain additional knowledge from the web.

(e) Allow pupils to identify and select the most useful information and sources when learning about and from religion. A critical example here is the map of the Fertile Crescent on the web. Most of the maps do not include Africa or the Nile in Egypt as they do not believe that Africa is part of the cradle of civilization. Students can therefore carefully make choices in downloading the right map for their use.

(f) Enable pupils to improve their decision making skills through the use of computer generated models. There are sites on the web where languages are taught. The fact that some over time have undergone some changes, do not remove from the net completely original alphabets as we have in Koine

Greek (the language of the New Testament that is no longer spoken today).

(g) Enable pupils to review, refine and present their ideas more effectively and in different ways. The ease of sending work today cannot be outshined. Pupils can readily change work format to suit and to present same with greater ease most unlike the era of just typewriters where the same work cannot be edited

In view of the vast array of advantages of integrating ICT in Christian Religious Studies, the need for teachers of CRS to update their knowledge in ICT is very important. Teachers' knowledge and skills would enable them to freely disseminate information to students and to be able to identify, troubleshoot and overcome various related problems.

## Challenges of Integrating Information and Communication Technology in the Teaching of Christian Religious Studies

The integration of ICT in the teaching of Christian Religious Studies even though it has unprecedented advantages, is not without constraints. Lubius, Lampo, Yunus, Shahar and Muhammad (2011) identified some of these constraints as follows:

i. Attitude: Some teachers especially those not exposed to the media in educational technology see the requirement as additional workload demanding an increase in preparation time.

ii. Management: Some managers do not give the necessary allocation for teachers to attend related courses. Besides most schools also face the problem of insufficient or unavailability of technology media facilities.

iii. Space and place: A resource centre to station and keep the equipment or teaching materials is not provided in certain schools.

iv. Lack of technical know-how by teachers: Most teachers of CRS are generally defective and not exposed to ICT materials, hence at the slightest

breakdown of any material, they lack the technical knowledge to handle them. This often leads to discouragement on the side ofteacherswho des ire to use ICT materials (Gyang, 2006).

Osakwe (2012) sums up other challenges of using ICT to include teachers' failure to help students develop the capacities necessary to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by ICTs, failure to acquaint the students with the strategies and mechanism of ICT, inadequacy of curriculum content, limited ICTs, inadequate funding, lack of basic infrastructure, lack of qualified personnels and lack of policy formulation and implementation machinery.

## Conclusion

In view of the importance of information and communication technology in teaching and learning, its integration in the field of Christian Religious Studies will continue to play a leading role to both teachers and students as learning the subject is made simple as a result of easy access to materials. This will help in making teacher preparation easier and will heighten the motivation to learn the subject.

## Recommendations

In the light of this discussion, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

1. Government should make information and communication materials available in schools in order to boost the teaching and learning of Christian Religious Studies in Nigeria.
2. Government should accord teachers the opportunity to attend refresher courses and training in the use of information and communication technology materials.

3. Government should sink in more money in the energy sub-sector so as to ensure steady supply of power in institutions of learning as ICT depends on energy.
4. Government should as a matter of urgency recruit those with ICT certificates and post them to secondary schools, to help them assist in the training of teachers.
5. Government policies on ICT should not only end on paper but practical steps should be taken to ensure proper implementation.
6. There is need for proper documentation of a curriculum on ICT in our schools. The curriculum should spell out content of what is to be taught iz different institutions of learning.
7. ICT should be taught at the different levels of education. This will prepare the students for the serious task of using ICT at the senior level of studies .
8. Multinational and local companies should be encouraged to donate ICT materials to schools, sponsor workshops, seminars and refresher courses for teachers and students in ICT.
9. Schools should also source for ICT materials from non-governmental organizations, old students' associations and philanthropists This will boost ICT usage in schools.

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