

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ON E-LEARNING; ISSUES, TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Religious Education on e-learning; issues, trends and challenges requires emphasis in a country like Nigeria where religion is of paramount concern to all. There are many questions from the religious angle concerning usage of electronics like; Television, smart phone, Ipad, video. CD, and DVD. Some parents are skeptical as to allowing their young ones access to smart phones. Some have banned their wards from watching some television stations. They are worried about the offensive images of obscene pictures, corrupting influence, pornography they are exposed to on the social media. Some have been asking at what age children should be allowed to use smart phones. Some parents want to know what the Bible and Koran say. They have been searching scriptures for answers others need further clarifications. This paper attempted to provide an insight from the

religious perspectives. It is expository as it will acquaint people with views of some experts on the subject. Recommendation and conclusion are proffered.

Keywords: Religious Education, E- Learning, Issues, Trends and Challenge

All the Religions in Nigeria applaud the use of ICT which is very good. Adherents of different religious bodies uses smart phones, Ipad, video CD and DVD to mention a few. These items are useful to them because their usage bring about human development and acquisition of knowledge.

There are many questions being asked in the religious circle that requires clarifications; some parents want to know the age their children may be allowed to start using smart phones. Some people have been searching the scripture to get a clue but may require further clarifications, others are worried about the offensive images, pictures and pornography.

To march the lightning speed in which things are changing globally there is need to highlight the importance of e-learning with respectto Religious Education as the quest for national development in Nigeria cannot be attained without recourse to promotion of positive values. Education involves developing from within while learning has to do with sourcing information from outside.

Proper education helps to bring talents to the fore as it helps to develop in born skills. It is now a known fact that if students are to be adequately equipped e-learning must be a key factor. According to Terri Coles words that are going to echo in your house are; when am I going to have a smart phone? Everyone else have one! Parents on the other hand want to know at what age their wards should be allowed to use smart phones. Some parents have been searching their Bible and Holy Quran, they want to know what the scripture says for clue before permitting their children. Then if this is the case there is the need for Religious education on e-learning.

Meaning of E-learning

E-learning is any form of instruction that is delivered electronically, Okigbo & Ndolo (2011) Said that e-learning is another way of teaching and learning which includes instruction delivered via all electronic media including the internet, intranets, extranets, satellite broad cost, audio/video tape, interactive TV and CD Rom.

E-learning offers the ability to manage and to share information across networks; its greater flexibility or provision in time and place makes it good for every user and with the rise of the digital age more children are creating online accounts and without adequate supervision, they are subject to harassment and predators.

Education is different from learning, which has to do with getting information from the outside. To have proper education all that one learns must appropriately be assimilated to reform the individual. The Nigerian education system requires restructuring because of it's too much emphasis on paper certificate. According to The World Council for Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI 2012) there is need for employment of effective delivery systems through e-learning so as to produce functional citizens who are locally and globally competent, effective and relevant.

History of ICT in Nigeria

Olatunde and Olugbenga (2011) observed that ICT can be traced back to Nigeria in 1886, when cable was connected between Lagos and London by the colonial masters. The service was extended to Ilorin and Jebba in the present Kwara and Niger States respectively. Since then it has grown steadily till independence and beyond and to various parts of the country. Then it was solely managed by NITEL and the telephone and telex lines they issued increased to 90,000 and 2000 respectively. These grew further till the 1990s with the introduction of mobile phones. The explosion in telephone services started with the introduction of Global System for Mobile Service (GSM) as telephone lines increased to millions. Remote villages which depended solely on satellite phone are now covered by internet services which are relatively cheap. The emergence of new technologies in the last quarter of the 20th century brought the waves of technology which permeates every aspects of our

lives. It has brought new opportunities in knowledge gathering on one hand and increased entrepreneurial activities in mobile phones, internet, personal computer (PC) etc. (Ahmad, Xavier, Perumel, Nor and Mohan, 2011)

Religious Education

Education is Dynamic, with new trends and approaches developing almost by the day. Through education the human minds are enlightened and are directed towards self-fulfillment. It is the acquisition of wealth for human development. The Latin word for education is “Paideia” and it means training and instruction. St. Basil the Great asserted that it is a guidance beneficial to the soul, frequently cleansing it painfully of its defilements from evil (Trench 2003:125). According to Webster’s online Dictionary(2013), Education is instruction or training by which people (generally youth) learn to develop and use their mental, moral and physical power. Qualitative Education makes the abstract real. To make the abstract real according to Oyebisi (2010) means bringing out the potential, talents and inbuilt traits of the Engineer, Lawyer, Doctor etc.

Electronics in the Bible and Quran

There is no single passage that mention electronics in the Bible or in the Koran. We therefore depends on the views of related passages that may give us incite as to their usage; Exodus 31:1-5. The Lord said to Moses, ‘See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.

Muhammed Abdullahi and Anwal Gambo (2015) stated that the term internet-Café is a compound word. He explained that the word ‘Internet’ means international computer network connecting other network computer from other companies. Café is a place where you can buy something. The word Internet Café means a place where people are doing transaction with networks through computer.

Religious Education on E-learning

Muhammed and Gambo (2015) are of the opinion that internet Café is allowed in Islam when they argued that what Allah forbids is Usury.’ but Allah hath permitted trade’ (buying and selling) Q: 2, v: 275. They are of the opinion that the use of the Internet Café is not a ‘haram’ a term in Islam which means forbidden or not allowed.

In 2009 Pope Emeritus, Benedict xvi wrote in Caritas in Vitiatae ‘Purchasing is always a moral and not simply an economic act, hence the consumer has a specific social responsibility, which goes hand-in-hand with the social responsibility of the enterprise. This is to say that while using the Internet we have to be guided by moral suasion. Here data manipulation aimed at obtaining political or economic advantages, without due respect for the person right is very common. Presently all sort of things pervade the social media, thus there is the need for the government to prosecute organized crime as seen in the digital system.

The case of photograph and picture have been analyzed by Islamic Scholars. Some say in Islam that all pictures which are drawn and molded statues are ‘haram.’ These are often very common in the social media. Those drawn and designed from imagination according to some Islamic scholars are prohibited. Bukhayt (2015) states that photograph was not among the forbidden by shariah (Qaradawi, 1985 p112-113). Thus it will count lawful). Islam for example posit that pictures and photographs taken for legitimate purpose are under 5 decision of Islamic sharia: Mubah (permissible), Makruh (misfortune), mandub (allowed), wajib (obligatory) and Mahzoor (adversity).

Meaning of Some of the Terms and Origin of Words in Electronics

(a) The Phone.

The term phone is known to Greek grammarians and natural philosophers. The term phone is inarticulate cry of a person or animal. According to Socrates extracted from Aristotle’s ‘Problemata’ 2.55. Only people participate in logos (uses words) while all other things use Phone (voice). Logos is a term in western philosophy, psychology, rhetoric, and religion derived from a Greek word meaning ground, opinion, expectation, word, speech, account, reason, discourse, but it became a technical term in

philosophy beginning with Heraclitus (c. 535-475BCE Ancient Greek philosophers use the term in different ways. Plutarch a Greek philosopher defined the term phone as sound that is irrational and without meaning.

The Stoics sees it as a sound in animals and a voice in humans, a vehicle of words Under Hellenistic Judaism, Philo (c. 20 BCE- 50CE) adopted the term into Jewish philosophy. Origen a patriarch of the early Church also a great theologian in the Greek early Church associated the word Logos with voice (phone). He ascribed the voice to be John the Baptist and the word (Logos) as Christ. This is evident in the theology of the Gospel as in Mathew 2: 18

*A **sound** is heard in Ramah,
The **sound** of bitter weeping,
Rachel is **crying** for her children;
She refuses to be comforted,
For they are dead*

And in another place in Mathew 3:3
*Someone is **shouting** in the desert,
Prepare a road for the lord;
Make a straight path for him to
travel.*

The analogy being drawn here is that the term sound, crying and shouting are translated as voice (phone) in other translation. Also see Mathew 24:31, 26:34, 1 Cor. 14:7, John 1:23, 3:8. St. Augustine the Latin theologian all postulated that John was the voice while Jesus was the word i.e. John claimed only to be the ‘voice of one crying in the wilderness’ (John 1:23). Thus linking the phone (cell phone, smart phone and iPhone) to the voice (John the Baptist) and to the Logos (Jesus Christ) it is Painful as the Pontiff issues warning against the increasing narcissism and ‘spiral hatred’ found on the social media networks in which we define ourselves starting with what divides us rather than with what unites us, giving rise to suspicion and to the venting of every kind of prejudice

(ethnic, sexual, politics, religious etc.). As Christians we all recognize ourselves as members of the one body whose head is the Christ.

Today it is from the phone i.e. smart phone that we can hear the voice of people, thus just like in the extant world where the term phone is a voice, the reason for purchasing the smart phone is to hear the voice of your callers and because it has been modernized you also visualized things like pictures both inanimate and animate.

When is One Old Enough to use a Smart Phone?

Research from Michigan: University of Michigan to be precise conducted by Nielsen discovered that 95% of teens have access to smartphone either theirs or a parent's. Experts are of the view that deciding an appropriate age for your kids to have a smart phone is more on a specific child develops than about the number of years they have reached, A book which parents having issues of determining should consult is 'Raising Humans in Digital world: Helping Kids Build a Healthy Relationship with Technology by Diana Graber. Experts acknowledge that there is intense social pressure among children to have a smart phones and that teenage social life is hard without one, but believes the potential problems outweighs the benefits.

Though the formation of Children is a delicate one and experts have described adolescence as a period of the storm. All what the youth need from their parents at this period is love, solidarity, peace, faith and not unhindered access to social media

(a) Television

Perhaps the most popular electronic device is the television. The television took several decades to develop. The inventors and engineers associated with the invention of television are Vladimir Zworykin, Philo Farnsworth and John Logie Baird. Baird a Scot living in in England was the first to demonstrate an operational television. He transmitted the first televised pictures of moving objects in 1924 but it was Philo who is credited with inventing the first electronic television. Vladimir was the first to apply for patent right and that was in 1922. The difficulty in deciding who invented

the first television centers on the fact that there were several discoveries added up to make the complete TV set.

Television and Children

Television is good for everyone because of its importance. While television programmes can be educational, if not monitored, children can watch too much of it. This means that they can pick up negative habits as well as they are not ready emotionally at what they watch. Parents must screen the type of programme their children watch. Experts' advice that children below the age of two have no business watching television. Parents should watch television with their children with the intention of providing guide and explanations wherever it is needed.

(b) The Video

The video was first designed for the television systems. In 1951 the first video tape recorder captured live images from television cameras. Video recorders were very expensive as it was sold during this period for as much as US\$50,000 dollars. It was in 1971 when Sony began selling videocassette recorder that the price dropped drastically. Today we have very clear picture this is due to high digital techniques.

Hypocritical Religiosity

Parents must be aware of this factor in Nigeria. There was a report in the Vanguard of July, 31 2009. That the song BengBengBeng, squeeze me, I just a boy by Femi Kuti has been banned from the Nigerian Airwaves by the government over its sexual content but the same song was picked, approved in South Africa, was approved for the Olympics in fact the song proved to be a massive hit and won Kuti his first major recording deal.

Some hypocrites in Nigeria who had criticized the song vehemently and who could be construed for Imams, Pastors and traditionalist who had the transport fares, had to travel to South Africa to enjoy the music.

Some girls dress sexily and some say that this is lust, but enjoys sleepless night watching sexily dressed girls in their smart phones. Traditionalist, Orthodox Churches, Pentecostals, and Muslims are not in

one accord and while some would disagree others would agree especially at the wearing of tightly fitted jeans. For Islam it forbids any exposure and prescribe the use of pujas. The best parents must adopt in a fast changing word is moderation

Benefits of Social Media

According to Tyowuah and Chen (2012) World Bank studies has shown a close relationship between illiteracy level and national income. The provision of primary health care, family planning and drinking water is largely dependent on improved education of which e-learning is a key player.

Pope Francis clarified that the Catholic Church sees the internet as a tool that can be used for the betterment of humanity. He launched an app called 'Click to Pray' which connects Catholic to a global network to share prayer intentions via smartphones. It also does the following:

- ❖ It reduces huge cost of printing of materials and it can be accessed at the convenience or anywhere the students intend.
- ❖ It does not require provision of message boards, charts email and teleconferencing which are potential draw back.
- ❖ It provides opportunity to meet distant friends
- ❖ It gives room for interaction among individuals and a sense of belonging
- ❖ It stores and creates greater access to information
- ❖ It reduces barriers such as economic status
- ❖ Users are able to meet people they may not have met in real life situation

Challenges

- (1) Lack of sufficient power supply.
- (2) Challenges is on effective internet connectivity
- (3) Effective skill to drive the technology is lacking
- (4) There is also the challenge of buying data at high cost.

Conclusion

There is nowhere in scripture that explicitly captures the usage of electronics. This is because they are modern gadgets. Instruction concerning their usage must depend on clergymen and experts in related discipline. It is not wise to ban your children because of the negative aspects in the media. The parable of the wheat and tares readily come into mind, in the natural world

Good and evil lie side by side: there are snake, sheep, scorpion, ant, lion all helps to depict the nature of the world we are living in. Parents must instruct and guide their wards properly. This must not mean a ban from the social media.

Recommendation

From the foregoing the following recommendations are proffered

1. Good parenting involve close monitoring in school, place of worship, social gathering and in and out of the house.
2. Parents must not forget that evil communication corrupts good morals. Religious groups to which they belong should also contribute to their spiritual up bringing through catechism, Sunday school, group meetings and appropriate sermons.
3. Parents should study and know the ability of their wards.
4. The giving of phone to children must not be based arbitrarily on age but on individual ability.
5. The progress of any country depends on the strength of its family life this is because a healthy family is a healthy society.
6. Parents must socially engage their children in the use of electronics.

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