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## E-LEARNING AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY NIGERIA: TRENDS, ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECT

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### Abstract

*This paper titled E-learning and religious Education in Nigeria: A case study of Christianity and Islam focuses on the benefit of E-learning in Religious education in Nigeria. The paper sees E-learning as the use of any electronic media including wireless to aid the process of teaching and learning. The concept of e-learning has been employed to enhance the process of teaching and learning either in the formal or non-formal classroom situation. In this regard, teacher and students of religious student in the two major*

Globally, there is a revolutionary impact on educational development as a result of increasing embrace of ICT awareness in this 21<sup>st</sup> century and the effect on the transformation of communities is laudable such that most developed countries achieve this feat by exploring the massive potentials for transformation, technological advancement and instructional process through the use of ICT.

E-learning, utilizes electronic technologies to access religious education curriculum outside of a traditional classroom. It refers to a course, program or degree delivered completely online. There are many terms used to describe learning that is delivered online, the internet, ranging from distance education, to computerized electronic learning, online learning, internet learning and many others. We define e-learning as a programme that is specifically delivered via the internet to somewhere other than the classroom. It is interactive in that one can also communicate with the teacher or other students in the class. As the case maybe, it is delivered live, where the learner can “electronically” raise his hand and interact in real time and sometimes it is a lecture that has been pre-recorded. There is always a teacher interacting and/or communicating with the learner and grading his participation, assignments and tests. E-learning has been proven to be a successful method of training and this type of education has become a way of life for many citizens in different religious tradition.

E-learning can provide access to quality learning content for instance, moral education in Christianity and the teacher. The importance of E-learning in different religious traditions of the world especially nowadays that teaching and learning emphasizes on modern or educational technologies cannot be overemphasized especially now that technology has been embraced.

In our religious education today, there are many applications available for religious education through online means both web, and mobile. To maximize this benefit, the religious organization must design specific policies on how this should be implemented and sustained at each level of religious bodies.

### **Meaning of E-Learning**

An acronym for information and communication technology. Hornby (2010) defines ICT as “the study of the use of computers, the internet, video and other technology. In another respect, it “is often applied in relation to the use of cell phones, digital music, high definition television, digital cameras, the internet, cable TV and other items that have come into common use for some times now.” Another definition is given by Bell (2001) as a “learning, thinking, communicating, creating, representing and research.” Summarily, it involves the development and use of technology to process information and aid

communication. However, e-learning refers to the use of the internet and ICT corroborated by Adu et al (2013) posits that Electronic Learning (e-learning) is an electronic delivery and administration of learning opportunities and support via computer network and web-based technology.

The purpose of this paper is to appreciate the place of e-learning as well as examining the trends, issues, challenges and prospects of applying e-learning in religious education in Nigeria in particular and the wider world in general. The paper adopts a historical and phenomenological approach in the discussion. It notes that e/learning has helped in no small way to improve the standard of teaching and learning of religious studies. The study concludes that e/learning should be made more accessible and affordable to enhance religious education in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework Overview**

In dealing with moral issues, three different approaches can be adopted. (Kohlberg and Mayer 1972). The Inductive Approach, Romanticist Approach (Raths, Harmin and Simon 1966) and the Cognitive-structural Approach. According to these scholars, the inductive approach embraces the teaching of a prescribed set of values, morals which serve as the core of the Religious education curriculum. The Romanticist approach does not encourage the provision of a prescribed set of morals and values and as a result, advocates moral relativism. The cognitive-structural approach advocates the use of reasoning and decision-making processes to determine what is morally good or bad. These three approaches to moral education have their defects, the inductive approach seemed to be most appropriate for the Religious education since it advocate for specific content in the curriculum. The other two approaches are relativistic in nature. As a result, the inductive approach has been used in teaching moral education; it was observed by Nwankwo (2006) that during the pre-colonial and the colonial periods that there was a shift of focus from the inductive approach to the Romanticist approach and the cognitive-structural approach to the teaching of moral Religious education.

### **Understanding Islamic Education**

Education is sacrosanct to a nation's economic growth, human development, peaceful coexistence, social justice and equity as well as the spiritual and religious guidance of the society. In tandem with this assertion, Muhammed (2018:230) remarks that:

*Islam as a religion enjoins its adherents to seek useful knowledge from cradle to grave. Islamic studies on the other hand trains the sensibility of students in such a manner that*

*their attitude to life, approach to all kinds of knowledge and decisions are all regulated by the value of Islam.*

In this regard, efforts have been made by Muslims to contribute meaningfully to human development, world civilization and culture (Adeyemi; 2006:) thus Islamic education has effect on the intellectual and spiritual growth of the Muslims.

It is pertinent to know that whereas Islamic studies refer to the academic subject offered in a formal school setting, Islamic education is the totality of the upbringing of an individual within the content and context of Islam (Abubakar: 2014). It encompasses human development, equity, social justice and religious harmony. It is wholistic and “transcends the classroom setting” because it embraces both formal and informal education.

### **Brief History of Islamic Education in Nigeria**

The history of Islamic Education in Nigeria is synonymous with the history of Islam in Nigeria due to the fact that Islam establishes its own form of education whenever it goes (Balogun, 1982). In the non- Arab world, the history of the teaching of Arabic paved way for the history of the spread of Islam and Islamic Education (Davidson, 1990), thus the elementary Arabic schools in Nigeria were known as Qur’anic schools where both Arabic and Islam were taught together. The pupils graduate from the elementary Arabic school after being able to memorize the Qur’an by rote (Fayose, 1995) to the higher school where the rudiments of Islam required to bring the student to the level of absorbing the content and context of Islam are taught, with focus on Islamic faith while the only reference and foundation is Allah, the Merciful, Creator and only God, besides whom there is no other.

The first Qur’anic School was established in the 11<sup>th</sup> century in the place of Kanem Ummi Jilmi of Old Bornu when he converted to Islam while Fafunwa (1995) opined that Islam came to the Hausa land of Nigeria in the 14<sup>th</sup> century through the traders and scholars from Mali and other African cities, citing Adeyemi (2016):

*During the reign of Yaqub (1452 C.E-1463 C.E), some Fulani scholars migrated to Kano, bringing with them books on Islamic theology and jurisprudence. It was during this period that Muslim scholars from Timbuktu came to Kano to teach and preached Islam. Al-Maghili, a famous scholar, later went to Kastina which had also become a centre of Arabic and Islamic learning during the fifteenth century. Many scholars emerged from this centre.... It was this Arabic and Islamic Education which gave cultural prestige to Islam.*

In the early days, the Quranic schools were usually held outside the Mosque unlike these days where they have structures of theirs and according to Umar (2000) between 1976 and 1996, Islamic education began to experience tremendous growth and graduated from

sitting on the mats outside the Mosques or houses into benches at Modern Islamic schools. He added that Arabic and Islamic studies were taught alongside western education subjects. Some of the school later established were, Arabic Teachers College, Jos, 1976; Al-Iman International Schools, Jos, 1982; College of Islamic Studies, Bauchi road, Jos, 1986; Tasheed Private Schools, Old Airport road, Jos, 1983; Al-Hilal Secondary School, Rikkos, Jos 1996 etc.

On the tertiary level, many Nigeria Universities have programmes in degrees at various levels like the Post Graduate Diploma (PGD), Bachelor of Arts (B.A), Bachelor of Arts Education (B.A Ed), Master of Arts (M.A), Master of Arts Education (M.A. Ed), M. Phil and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D) in Arabic and Islamic studies. Some of these tertiary Institutions include Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Lagos, Ibadan, Ilorin, Kano, Sokoto, Maiduguri, Bayero-Kano and Ekiti State University.

Canham and Ozigi (1979) asserts that to regard Islamic education in Nigeria as a sort of fossilised relic of glorious but irrelevant past is to misinterpret history. (Cited in Adeyemi (2016).

Fafunwa (1995) explains that:

*Within the ranks of the Orthodox Muslims, a number of organizations sprang up at the turn of twentieth century to develop western derived education within a Muslim context. One of the most dynamic and the largest of these organizations was the Ansar-ud-deen society which was founded in Lagos in 1923..... In 1937, the Ansar-ud-deen was introduced to Ibadan and it later built schools there.... The environment of the schools by then was kept Islamic so that Muslim children could gain Western Education without parents being concerned about Christian proselytization. With the embracing of western education, the Arabic and Islamic teachers can now be exposed to ICT as a tool for continuous and up to date reference for better teaching performance.*

### **Challenges of E-Learning in Islamic Education**

Ogeri Chukwu (2016) remarked that e-Learning is expected to improve pedagogy as the barrier between students and their teachers are removed paving way for personal interaction at the comfort of their homes without face-face physical presence, however, Musa (2012) laments that despite the various technological breakthrough in various fields, much has not been achieved in transforming digitally, the process of instruction in Islamic studies resource searching due to inaccessibility of ICT facilities. Citing Resnick (2005) who posited that:

*In most places where new technologies are being used in education today, the technologies are used simply to reinforce outmoded approaches to learning. Even as scientific and*

*technological advances are transforming agriculture, medicine and industry, ideas about and approach to teaching and learning remain largely unchanged in developing countries.*

Even when these ICT facilities are readily available, some of the Islamic teachers are not digitally-knowledgeable, and when knowledgeable and skilled the in-adequate power supply which are irregular and frequently interrupted are disturbing factors and major setback to the performance of these ICT facilities. Many rural arrears in Nigeria lack access to the National grid coupled with incessant vandalization of the cables and other materials, whereby the large populations of those interested in Islamic education in the rural arrears are forced to abandon such dreams unless there is the means of moving to the urban cities.

### **Benefits of E-Learning in Islamic Education**

E-Learning, though an aspect of ICT revolution in Nigeria is still struggling for relevance in the Nations educational system, however, it is beneficial to Islamic Education due to the introduction of flexibility in the pedagogy of Islamic education. It saves time and money as the student can learn from the comfort of his home, making learning more effective. It enables both Muslims and non-Muslims surf the internet to improve one's vocabulary and knowledge of the Qur'an, updating and transfer of knowledge, effective research due to numerous research and references with ease and the web-based facilities allow the research for more educational information. It also creates an avenue with others for profitable networking amongst colleagues in order to share ideas and personal experiences and knowledge of the Islamic faith (Musa 2012:3-5).

### **Some Islamic Education Web-Sites**

<http://www.uga.edu/islam/>

<http://www.arabacademy.com/>

<http://etext.lib.virgina.edu/koran.html>.

<http://www.stgbrown.edu/webs/qiran-broswer/>

<http://www.bbcarabic.com>

<http://justthink.org/curriculum/english-as-a-second-language/>

<http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/public/about.html>.

<http://welcomedigitalibrary.blogspot.com/2011/04/arabicmanuscripts-online-fihrist.html>.

(Etubi 2009:6)

### **E-Learning and Moral Education in Christianity**

E-learning is learning utilizing electronic technologies to access educational curriculum outside of a traditional classroom. It refers to a course, program or degree delivered completely online. There are many terms used to describe learning that is delivered online, the internet, ranging from distance education, to computerized electronic learning, online learning, internet learning and many others. We define e-learning as course that are specifically delivered via the internet to somewhere other than the classroom where a Professor is teaching. Maiyo (2015) It is not a course delivered via a DVD or CD ROM, video tape or over a television channel. It is interactive in that you can also communicate with your teacher, Professor or other students in your class. Sometimes it is delivered live, where you can “electronically” raise your hand and interact in real time and sometimes it is a lecture that has been pre-recorded. There is always a teacher or professor interacting and communicating with you and grading your participation, your assignments and your tests. E-learning has been proven to be a successful method of training and education is becoming a way of life form many citizens in Christianity denominations.

Education technology is connected with the cover, teaching theory as well as learning theory.

E-learning can provide access to quality learning content for moral education in Christianity and the teacher (the pastors improve data management processes for Christian fellowship and Christian worship).

The importance of E-learning in Christianity education especially nowadays that teaching and learning emphasis on modern or educational technologies cannot be overemphasized especially now that technology has been embraced.

In our Christian education today, there are many applications available for Christian education through online means both web, and mobile E-learning system. The Christian organization must design specific policies on how this should be implemented and sustained at each level of Christian denomination.

### **E-Learning in Christianity**

E-learning refers to learning by using electronic modes like online education. The development and spread of E-learning are seriously breaking down traditional barriers like geography and social electronic status. In the future, E-learning in Christian education will enable students of the bible to receive moral instruction from pastors anywhere in the world. The most talented pastors will use technology to deliver their moral teaching to their followers all over the world without having a physical contact with them.

E-learning can occur in or out of the church building. E-learning in Christian education is suited to distance learning and flexible learning, but it can also be used in conjunction with face to face teaching. The impact of E-learning in Christian education depends on a myriad of factors. The benefit of E-learning is that Christians can access a religious website to gain more knowledge on Christian values anywhere at any time. Christians can post in moral values and their contributions will also help the younger Christians to develop Christian values as well. Illechukwu & Ugwuozor (2014) this has been a huge impact on the evolution of computer usage and the integration of newer technologies in Christian education. The internet has become one of the most important communications channel offering the prospect of collaboration and communication. The Christian conceptualized education in a process of developing and cultivating (whether physically or mentally or morally) one's mental activity or senses, the expansion, strengthening, and discipline of one's mind, faculty etc. the forming and the regulation of principles and character in order to prepare and fit for any Christian calling or Christian business by systematic instruction. The emergency of ICT revolution has affected the development of Christian education in our secular or Christian institution of learning as these has been relative awareness of the vital role of information in Christian moral building. The importance of Christian education to human beings cannot be overemphasized globally, Christian education is considered as a human transferring agent toward moral building which should be accorded to all Christian no matter his or her denomination in fact that is why a lot of Christian denomination consider Christian moral education as a fundamental Christian right.

### **Moral Education during the Pre-Colonial Period**

The study of moral education could be traced to the pre-colonial period when the subject formed an integral part of traditional African education. Before the advent of Western style education, the people of African in general had their own African form of education which Christian education absolved. Oyelade (2015) stated the goals of traditional African educated.

To develop character,

To develop child's latent physical skills.

To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and communities affair.  
To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a health attitude toward honest labour.  
To develop intellectual skills.

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To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority.

To understand, appreciate, and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

It is on this note that education generally aims at the development of the cognitive, affective, and the psychomotor domains of the learner. In other words, it aims at the total development of the individual. The above goals satisfy the three domain of educational objective, as contained in Utsey (2008) namely cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Traditional African Education aimed at initiating young ones and ushering them into adulthood, to lead very responsible lives in their communities.

The curriculum for African moral education covers the things in the social environment. Children were made to learn about how to build good social relationships. This could be done using appropriate greetings and responses, how to show appreciation to people, how to show respect for elders and people in authority and how to subordinate individual interests to societal interest (Occiti 2006) all these helps to promote moral and value education among Christian during and before the advent of formal education.

### **Moral Education during the Colonial Period**

During the colonial era, moral education continued to be active. This time the school took over the teaching of the subject from the home. Certain educational policies affected the teaching of African moral education. During the colonial era, the religious morality was enforced and this led to the use of inductive approach in teaching moral education. In the school curriculum, religious instruction was used to teach moral education, and the content was exclusively based on Christian moral. Bible passages were used to indoctrinate pupils Ofori-attah (2006).

The based mission followed the pioneering role by the European merchants by establishing their first schools in other to carry out their missionary work and build the moral life of the Christians. Religious education was part of the school curriculum, and it was use to teach moral education to children.

The colonial government also adopted the basel mission educational policy and enlarged the teaching of moral education.

### **Education and E-Learning**

It is obvious today that Christian are undergoing a constant change necessitated by electronic learning and the information communication technology (ICT) revolution, which has as well resulted in the increasing complexities in Christian knowledge expansion. In the same vane there is a great change in the Christian educational system in that what is being taught now transcends the moral extolled by dominations all over the word. It is difficult to see domination without a channel television projector and other information gadgets.

William, Teresa, Hartnea and Erieh (2004) in Keagon and Awah (2013) suggest that Christian educational institutions and its various faculties/departments will need to change their curriculum every two or three years in order to ensure that the content of their teaching, research and community service reflects the rapidly advancing frontiers of scientific knowledge. This has necessitated the internationalization of Christian education, not just in one denomination, all over the denominations based on the benefit or moral benefits derivable.

The upsurge of the e-learning have caused the Christianity to readjust their service delivery pattern, it has made Christian teachers, leaders to prepare to inculcate biblical moral information otherwise known as preaching because the audience are with their handset to browse the topic. UNESCO (2009) rightly acknowledged that educational institutions have become the agencies for dissemination of knowledge and societal moral values and increasingly becoming international in character.

Kpakol (2002), observes we are seeing dramatic changes in the way we communicate, the way we travel, the way we shop, the way we work, the way we do literally. This is not an accident of some sort. No one should be afraid of these new technologies. No one should be afraid of E-learning. It has not come to consume you. It has not come to consume you. It has come so that you can consume more.

Simon (2002) the scholar observed that E-learning is a process about people merging, throwing away certain blockages and barriers, thereby forging unity that have never been seen in history.

The major goal of E-learning is the achievement of millennium development goals. (M.DGs) which target significant human development progress in all parts of the globe. To achieve the MDGs education system including Christian education must be revolutionalized both in content and instructional strategies as well as the professionals to enable them discharge the relevant teaching through e-learning.

Apologun (2005) in Etuk (2007) observed that e-learning agenda is firmly rooted in internationalization of issues and programmes such that they cut across national boundaries. E-learning demands that Christian education in this 21<sup>st</sup> century must strive to ensure accurate learning, provide well conceptualized, designed and implemented biblical and moral teaching, biblical research programme, Christian community engagement that would enable Christians to think critically and analytically gather and process empirical data and engage in sustainable production of moral and good value.

## **Conclusion**

*E-Learning and Religious Education: A Case Study of Christainity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nigeria: Trends, Issues, Challenges and Prospect* -**Dr. Agi Otto Obodoegbulam; Smart Onyemauche Nwonkwo and Kingsley Kayode Longe**

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The term E-learning has many complex components (religion, economic, political, socio-cultural, demographic environmental and technological); all aspects having depending on educational systems particularly moral education and the society at large. As in all emerging trends worldwide, there are positive effects of e-learning which have been buttressed in this paper. However, some negative effects too that the Christian leaders in moral education need to be aware of and take necessary precaution so as not to dwell on them.

### **Recommendations**

The relevance of e-learning in the pedagogy of Islamic education cannot be over emphasized. Therefore, education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigeria depends on the synergised efforts of all stakeholders Islamic education, Based on this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The students' should be motivated to arouse their interest in studying religion, as this may lead to showing desire in the method to be used via e-learning.
2. Stakeholders should endeavour to make adequate provision of trained man power and required facilities.
3. Only qualified instructors via training should be allowed to teach, thus on-the-job training on ICT should be mandatory.
4. The instructors must be friendly to the learners and utilize suitable pedagogical method to keep the training interesting.
5. The students should be motivated to constantly peruse the various religious web-sites while the sites should be upgraded at short intervals with due attention to upgrading the old articles.

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