CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) BRIDGING THE GAP IN EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
What we have been unable to solve for decades in this country as social malaise is bridging the gap in Education. The question of Christian education in the church calls to mind the need to look at the command of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel. The ministry of the church will be discussed through the information and communication technology (ICT) in trying to bridge the gap of education. This paper examined the introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into all walks of life has been a blessing to everybody. ICT has provide humanity with safer, more effective and even more globalized result oriented ways of doing things without having a risk of loose of life. Going further missionary helped the educational system when they came to move up to a better standard, important of mission to human live. The paper focused on the importance of mission and ICT to lives. The study affirmed that if one wants to prosper and develop, that individual should think of how to help others and improve on people’s knowledge through mission and missionary activities. ICT challenges in missionary schools and recommendation given to aid and show the way forward towards the topic; Christian education: Information and Communication Technology (ICT) bridging the gap in education in Nigeria.

The question of Christian education in the church calls to mind the needs to look at the command of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Mathew 28:19-20: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”
Taylor (2006), in view of the above quotation which is popularly Christened “The Great Commission,” sees the ministry of the church thus:

This ministry is many faceted. It includes the telling of the gospel of mankind, the cultivation of worship, deeds of mercy and works of love, efforts of Christians to live as citizens of God’s kingdom while they are citizens of the kingdoms of this world, the education of the faithful and the humanity to the meaning of God’s activity in the world.

Since this presentation is to consider “Role of Christian education in the church”, it will yield more dividends to embark on definition of certain terms in the topic which are certainly strategic to better comprehension. Such will include:

**Education**

Onaiyekan (2013), defined education by saying, it is an aggregate of all the process of learning by which an individual develops his / her abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive values to the society he lives in. Going by this definition the researcher added, education is an opportunity for an individual to survive as independent person through honest labour and participates in the affair of the community.

The Christian education job is more than just teaching the bible. Christian education is a call to the Christian educator to seek to creatively combine and integrate insight from various disciplines in the thought and practices of education. In his view; Pazmino (2009), suggested that, Christian education should have scope that incorporate insight from such disciplines as fine and applied arts, economics, political science, systems theory, management theory, engineering and mathematics, because Christian education must be wholistic in thought and practice. Full and effective reconciliation must bring all things under God’s rule.

**Mission**

Okoro (2010), opined that the word “mission” in its modern sense apparently goes back to ST. Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century. By the fourth “vow of the mission,” certain Jesuits were sent to non Christian land or to countries lost by Catholicism during the protestant reformation as agent vested with the authority of the Pope to propagate the Catholic faith. Those sent soon came to called “missionaries” and the places they were sent, “mission.”

The concept missions historically were close associate with the practice of European colonialism. The idea supposed that the “established churches” of Western Europe had a duty to transplant their form of Christendom to the previously non-Christianized nation colonized by their countries. It implied the superiority of the old
Christendom and the inferiority of the people colonized. The religious mission was normally combined with the secular enterprise of “Civilizing” these peoples, in other words, transplanting western culture models. Thus the term “Mission” came to mean the complex of activities by which the western ecclesiastical system was extended all over the world through the above topic by the Technology, bridging the gap in education.

While stressing on the importance of mission to human lives, Onyeidu (2004) opined that the mission to Nigeria came not only with the Bible but also with the plough and the Christian missionary agents came to us, not only to save human souls, but also to provide health delivering services respectively, the above quotations means that the missionaries care for human health and well being.

**Concept of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

Information and Communication Technology means different things to different people, since there are various view and definitions of ICT. French (1996), state that, ICT. Is a broad base on technology which includes methods, managements and applications that are employed in the creation, storage, manipulation and communication of information.

Obanya (2002), viewed ICT as a broad concept that has to do with the harnessing of process, methods and the product of electronic and the communication related technologies and other related resources in today’s knowledge driven society, for enhancing the availability, the spread out efficiency of a set of programmed activities geared towards the achievement of clearly defined goals. ICT is seen as a tool that comprises electronic devices which are utilized for information and communication needs of institutions, churches, organizations, students are individuals.

The term “ICT” describes the use of computer based technology and the internet to make information and communication services available to a wide range of users. The term is used broadly to address the rage of technologies, including: internet and telephones. Internet may include text, images, sound and video.

ICT deals with the application layer, the systems that enable information to be collected and distributed, analyzed, and processed. Is an integration of the technologies and the process of distributing and communicating the desired information to the target audience and getting the target audience more participative.

ICT means information channels such as the World Wide Web, online data base, electronic documents, management and accounting systems, internets and so no. communication channels such as email, electronic discussion group, electronic conferences, and the use of cell phones. Hardware and software are used to generate,
prepare, transmit and store data such as computers, radio, television, computer programmes and so on.

**Information and Communication Technology in Trying to Bridge the Gap of Education**

With the introduction of ICT into all walks of life, this has been an educational blessing to everybody; ICT has provided the Nigerian and all humanity with safer, effective and globalized result oriented ways of doing things without having a risk or loose one’s life.

Alex (2012), rightly averred that “any advancement in information technology enables us to see ourselves in new ways of communication in this present day and also gives us increasing potential to create the greatest era of history the Nigerian family has ever known.” With the above the researcher observed that, ICT launches us into new ways of doing things for example, the use of power point in seminar presentations, conferences, lectures makes presentation very easy and visible. Most churches use power point and loud speaker in their services so that no matter how far one may be from the alter, one will see and hear the programme.

Many Christian denominations have gone far in their activities and programmes globally. Branches of Roman Catholic Church world wild could hear from the papacy directly through the assistance of ICT or satellite to be precise. ICE is helping people to get answers to their question and solutions to their problems globally. The importance of mission and ICT to lives cannot be over emphasized because they have affected all aspects of human life. It helps to bring development among people.

Hunter (2010), observed that mission and education are determinant factor for prosperity, welfare sustenance and security of the people. This research focuses on the importance of the mission and ICT to lives. The researcher affirmed that if one wants to prosper and develop, that individual should think of how to help others and improve on people’s knowledge in order to bridge the gap in education in Nigeria.

**General Benefit of Adopting Sustainable Policies to Wards ICT**

There are several benefits Nigeria will derive in adopting sustainable policies towards ICT. According to Isiramen (2010), the importance of information cannot be over emphasized. People need information to plan and carry out their decisions. Most people could greatly benefit from information on better choice of food, better nutrition, child care family planning, immunization, prevention and control of endemic diseases.

Ebigbo (2003) supported this view by stating that “mobile telephone usage by individuals enable them to communicate with loved ones, Clients and business
associates.’’ it is a means of large business, of providing a service that lead to an increase in profits. As a tool for sustainable livelihoods, mobile telephone provides employment for many who could have been idle.

Emmanuel (2004), opined that computers originated by scientists for calculating numbers, have gradually become useful in office and industries. Recently, simplified models that can be used almost everybody has become common in schools and home for accomplishing many varies task and applications. Added to this Okafor (2007), stated that with internet connectivity, one can do business all over the world without physical contact with the buyer or the need for the business intermediary.

Surviving in the information age depends with access to national and global information networks. ICTs are thus seen as the bedrock for the survival and development of any nation in a rapidly changing global environment and it challenges one to use his initiative to address a host of issues of capacity building.

Information and communication technology is important to our daily life. Viz, one can read newspapers using online newspapers, connect to one’s family, relatives or colleagues. These are simple ways of how ICT creates a great impact to our society life. This is bridging the gap in education in our country Nigeria.

Thioune (2003), noted that for the past two decades most developed countries have witnessed significant changes that can be traced to ICT, and have been observed in all aspects of human life such as education, economic, communication, social and so on. An informal society is one that makes the best possible use of ICT. Such society in which the quality of life as well as prospects for social change and economic development depend increasingly upon information and it’s exploitation. Martin (1988) observed that in such a society, living standards patterns of work and leisure, the education system, and market place are all influence by advances in information and knowledge. This is evident in the increasing array of information – intensive products and services.

Mission in The Past

Mission Work started many decades ago, that is after the death, burial and resurrection of our lord Jesus Christ. Daira stated that ‘’ St Paul was the well know missionary in the history of Christianity, Then other Legendary missionary Ventures attributed to the apostles, Unknown missionaries soon carried the gospel to the Limits of Roman world?

In the pasts missionaries from countries that received the gospel of Jesus Christ early were always sending their missionaries to countries were the gospel has not been
preached. Even till date a lot of Christian organization still sends missionaries out of the purpose of winning souls through the preaching of the gospel and some cases offering help to the people ranging from educational, medical, financial, moral and social and in many other ways. These modes of evangelism and missions were very effective and through them, many countries have received the gospel of our Lord. This Christian education was giving in bridging the gap in the education.

Historically, since the 16th century the concept of “mission” was closely associated with the practice of European Colonialism. The ideal supposed that the “established churches” of Western Europe had a duty to transplant their form of Christendom to the previously non Christianized nation colonized by their countries. It implied the superiority of to old Christendom and the inferiority of the people colonized. The religious mission was normally combined with the secular enterprise of “Civilizing” these peoples, in other words, transplanting western cultural models. Thus the term “mission” came to mean the complex of activities by which the western ecclesiastical system was extended all over the world. Going further Kagarko (2009), posited that, some of the methods adopted by the early missionaries includes the following: Open air preaching, door to door preaching, trickling-down evangelism, friendship evangelism, and creative evangelism.

The Present Mission

Mission and missionaries active have taken many forms and dimensions. Some of the ways and means through which missions were carried out in the past are not the same with the present. For example, Paul in the book of second Corinthians 11:25, was making reference to how he was shipwrecked about three times, because sea route was one the easiest ways of travelling in these days. Today because of the breakthrough in technology, mission has taking many shapes, most of the things the earlier missionaries could not have access to, the present one have access to them.

Ballad (2008), commented that in the space of nearly 80 years he has seen so many change. He said when I began my mission in England in 1948; the most common way for people to get news was through newspapers and radio. Added to this Aja (2007) said, how different the world is today, some people now read newspapers on the internet. Ours is the world of cyber space, cell phone and can capture video and music, download social networks, text messaging and blogs, handhelds and podcasts.

Technology has made mission easier than it was. There have been many breakthroughs in Information and Communication Technology and a lot of people are taking advantage of them to reach the wider world in gospel preaching. Christian education, information and communication technology will help in bridging the gap in education in Nigeria.
The Importance of ICT Mission

Lives are simplified by ICT in every field of life. That is the reason why individual, groups, firms and organizations are embracing this technology in order to meet the development of the world. Mission is therefore very much powerful when it is done with the advancement in technologies.

The situation of our contemporary world demands information technology almost in every field of life. Christian mission is to bring good news to every creature, how can one do it successfully without using ICT and it’s device in this technological age? Unless missionaries develop and catch up with the use of ICT, the may not meet the need of the people of today. Therefore Christian mission has to be done along with all new technologies.

One can talk of the importance of ICT to mission by looking at the ICT devices such as printing media, radio, television, cell phone, video conferencing or seminar and the internet.

Print Media

This is the oldest mass media and one of the most useful instruments for mission work. Soraard (1998), observed that “some believes that literature is the most effective and far reaching, and is used by all churches or mission to spread the good news. Print media include device like newsletters, newspaper, booklets, tracts, magazines, books and other information letters, which are very commonly used by today’s church organization. Some of them works as a channel for information and inspiration, some like a signal which are delivered by the people of other places, some printed media act as missionaries that spread the sermons, article, songs and other writings about the word of God .people can be imparted and informed through these writings by which they could see the reality of life and works of Jesus. Distributing Bible tracts are also very much helpful for bridging the gap of education in Nigeria.

Radio

The broadcasting of sermons, music and other discussion enriches missions work. The role of radio seem more meaningful in the village and remote areas from where signals of radio could catch easily. There are Christian owned stations which broadcast only Christian programs Like 92.2 Fm Inspirational Fm. Through radio, people especially villagers listen to gospel songs and sermons which could inspire their spiritual lives.

Television

Television is one of the active devices for mission work. Various television sermons, discussions, Video and the other programmes are broadcasting to the
audience. People can hear and see what is going on through life telecasts and highlighted programmes. Television plays a vital role to the people who do not really access internet. It could reach a large group of people at the same time. Because of this, missionaries, Christian ministers could have opportunity to speak or to spread the message of God to large number of people at a time. That in turn impacts knowledge about God. That is Christian Education in bridging the gap in Education.

**Telephone**

Telephone is a useful instrument for missionary activities nowadays. There are telephone numbers where people submit their problem and the end users answers on telephone. Telephone is new and fast spread Technology. It is good opportunity to spread Bible verses, good news through SMS in other to lead them into better way.

More than half of the people have their own telephones. Some organizations take this opportunity to do mission work especially, prayer and counseling. With this Christian Education, information and communication Technology, bridging the gap in Education is made easy.

**Computer and Internet**

The main function of computer in mission is producing hard and soft copy of materials, data, information and others. All the printed media are the outcome of computers. The church uses it to type out their documents. Internet is accessed using computer and other related gadgets.

Internet is a network which links people, country, places and the whole world is made one village through internet. The linking of people in the network thus provides the field for mission work. Many churches set their own website so that their mission is broaden. Internet accessing is very easy and fast, the information could reach the destination in a second. Because of internet Facilities, mission work is straighten and enlarged as missionaries can stay in one country and preach to the whole world at the same time.

**Information and Communication Technology Challenges**

There is no one formula for determining the optional level of ICT integration in contemporary mission and Christian institutions. Advances in ICT and its increasing inter connectedness across world posse serious challenges to contemporary mission and Christian institutions. One of these challenges is the missionaries and teaches failure to develop in the converts and students the capacities necessary to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by ICTs.
ICT have not been used as a way of acquiring new knowledge and skills in Christian institutions due to inadequacy of curriculum content and Limited access to ICTs. These challenges include: Lack of basic infrastructure, inadequate funding, Lack of qualified personnel, Lack of competent administrators, Lack of technical support specialist, Lack if time and resources, Lack of coordination, Lack of information and guidance and so on.

Conclusion
Christian education (ICT) is one among the prominent pillars of the total church ministry and its claims cannot be denied. The philosophy, content and methodology of this distinctive system of education, plus its relatedness to order disciplines, are things to watch as we consider this kind of education. The person of the teacher and the goal must also be watched with care. Christian education (ICT) is a powerful tool the church can utilize to build individuals, families and a church that is strong and productive, one anchored on the invincible rock of ages.

It is clear from the paper that if any person, group, institution or society welcome ICT, the person, group, institution or society welcome civilization and if well handled, it makes life very easy.

Recommendation
To ensure the goal of Christian Education, Information and communication technology, bridging the gap in Education in Nigeria, the following recommendation are made:
1. The government should do something about power i.e. electricity failure. Because there is no ICT without electricity.

2. The Christian Leaders should help Christians in this great task of mission by creating awareness, seminars and workshops to the masses and to develop information infrastructure, which is easily accessible and reachable to all.

3. Christian should make sure that with the help of ICT that the good news will get to those regions that seem to have been abandoned.

4. What should be upper most in the mind of Nigerians is the survival of Nigerians as an indivisible entity in peace and harmony irrespective of political affiliation and Christian education ICT is the major factor to achieve that.

5. Each educational institution should as a matter of urgency set up ICT programme to bridge the gap of education.
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