THE ROLE OF ICT AND LMS IN TEACHING CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract
Integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Learning Management Systems (LMS) is revolutionizing the teaching of Christian Religious Studies (CRS) in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This innovative approach enhances the learning experience by providing students and instructors with access to diverse theological perspectives and scholarly materials. LMS platforms enable structured course organization and effective monitoring of student performance. However, implementing these tools faces challenges such as infrastructure deficiencies, limited digital literacy, and resistance to traditional teaching methods. Despite these obstacles, integrating ICT and LMS in CRS education promotes critical thinking and real-world application of Christian teachings. This study emphasizes the need for educator training and increased investment in technological resources to maximize the benefits of these technologies. By aligning pedagogical methods with technological advancements, Nigerian tertiary institutions can create a more inclusive and engaging learning environment for CRS students, ultimately contributing to the ongoing evolution of education in Nigeria.

Introduction

In recent years, the landscape of education has undergone seismic shifts driven by the rapid advancement of technology (Leonielyn G. Malicay, 2023). In various studies by (Agbesanya et al., (2024), and Nwankwor (2021), integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Learning Management Systems (LMS) in Nigerian tertiary institutions has become increasingly pertinent in the teaching of various disciplines, including Christian Religious Studies (CRS). Academic institutions face the dual challenge of preserving traditional pedagogical methods while embracing innovative technologies that facilitate enhanced learning experiences. The emergence of ICT and LMS provides a promising avenue for educators to engage students more meaningfully, thus fostering an interactive and enriching learning environment.

As with many other academic disciplines, Christian Religious Studies, with its profound emphasis on moral and ethical teachings, can benefit from technology integration. The infusion of ICT tools into the CRS curriculum enhances access to diverse theological

perspectives and enriches the overall teaching methodology. For instance, online resources such as e-books, scholarly articles, and multimedia content can offer students a broader understanding of religious concepts, history, and contemporary issues. By surpassing the limitations of traditional textbooks, these resources enable learners to explore multifaceted viewpoints and engage in dynamic discussions surrounding faith, spirituality, and societal relevance (Lim & Churchill, 2016).

Moreover, Learning Management Systems are pivotal platforms for organising and delivering course content. By leveraging these systems, educators can create structured online environments for better communication between students and instructors. Features such as discussion forums, quizzes, and assignment submissions streamline academic interactions, making it easier for students to navigate their educational journeys and for teachers to assess and provide feedback on their performance.

Despite the rosy advantages and opportunities that technology offers in teaching and learning CRS, the transition to a technology-enhanced educational model is not without its challenges. Infrastructure deficiencies, such as unreliable internet access and inadequate technological resources, pose significant hurdles to effective ICT and LMS integration. Similarly, Abu et al. (2022) observed that a lack of digital literacy among educators and students can hinder the adoption of these tools, resulting in a reluctance to embrace new teaching strategies. Furthermore, Makdee et al. (2023) reckoned with the fact that traditional attitudes towards education often clash with the innovative methodologies proposed by ICT and LMS, leading to resistance among stakeholders. Thus, it is crucial to address these challenges to harness the full potential of technology in education.

Strategies for overcoming the observed barriers, including investing in proper technological infrastructure, providing comprehensive training for educators, and fostering a culture that values and promotes digital literacy, need to be explored. By equipping educators with the necessary skills to effectively utilize ICT and LMS, educational institutions can create an empowering environment for teachers and students.

Hence, this study delves into the multifaceted role of ICT and LMS in enhancing the teaching of Christian Religious Studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions. It explores the benefits these technologies bring to the educational experience and the challenges that must be navigated to enable their successful implementation. Through a comprehensive analysis, this study aims to present best practices and strategies that can facilitate effectively integrating these technologies into the CRS curriculum. Ultimately, the study strives to contribute to the discourse surrounding the future of education in Nigeria, emphasizing the need to align traditional pedagogical approaches with contemporary technological innovations.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Learning Management Systems (LMS) in the teaching of Christian Religious Studies (CRS) within Nigerian tertiary institutions. The research process involved a comprehensive literature review, examining existing studies, reports, and articles relevant to technology integration in education and specifically in CRS. This review aimed to identify key themes, challenges, and successes documented in the field.

Data were collected through semi-structured online questions on the views of educators and administrators from various tertiary institutions in Nigeria. These interviews provided firsthand insights into the experiences and perspectives of those directly involved in implementing ICT and LMS in their teaching practices. The data collected were analysed thematically, allowing for the identification of common challenges faced, as well as effective strategies and successful case studies that illustrate best practices in technology integration.

An on-site case study of institutions that have successfully adopted the technologies was conducted in three higher learning institutions. The combination of literature review and qualitative interviews ensured a well-rounded perspective on technology's efficacy and impact in enhancing CRS teaching. This methodology provides a solid foundation for understanding the current context and helps identify actionable recommendations for the future integration of ICT and LMS in Nigerian education.

Challenges in Using ICT and LMS for Teaching Christian Religious Studies

As the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Learning Management Systems (LMS) becomes more prevalent in Nigerian tertiary institutions, examining the key challenges accompanying this transition is imperative. While the potential benefits of enhanced access to resources and improved teaching methodologies are significant, various obstacles impede effective implementation. Some of the encumbrances include the following:

Infrastructure deficiencies, such as inconsistent internet connectivity and insufficient technological resources, remain prominent barriers, particularly in rural areas and less-funded institutions. These limitations disrupt the learning experience and contribute to disparities in educational outcomes.

Moreover, the digital literacy level among educators and students can significantly affect their ability to engage with these technologies fully. Many educators may feel overwhelmed or unprepared to incorporate ICT and LMS into their teaching practices. In line with Makdee et al. (2023), resistance to change from traditional teaching methodologies can further complicate the acceptance of new, technology-driven approaches. Nevertheless, Herman et al. (2022) claim that understanding these challenges is crucial for developing targeted strategies to facilitate a more effective integration process, ensuring that teaching and learning remain dynamic and relevant in an increasingly digital educational landscape.

Certain hindrances have been identified to hinder the effective integration process in teaching Christian Religious Studies with enhanced ICT and LMS. In other words, despite the potential advantages, numerous obstacles impede the effective utilization of ICT and LMS in teaching CRS in Nigerian higher education institutions. The key obstacles are highlighted below:

Limited Access to Reliable Internet and Electricity: Inconsistent Internet access and unstable electricity supply are significant barriers to using ICT and LMS tools. This issue affects students and educators, making it difficult to rely on these technologies for uninterrupted learning (Aminu, 2018).

Resistance to Change and Inadequate Training are major factors in realizing the objectives of discussing the impactful benefits of chatbots, AI, and LMS. According to Adebayo (2020), some educators resist adopting new technologies due to a lack of training and familiarity with ICT and LMS platforms. Nevertheless, proper training and surfing

preparations will showcase the struggle to integrate these tools effectively into their teaching practices.

A major observation made by most participants and articulated by Idowu (2017) and Eze (2021) is the incompatibility of the new technologies with the existing CRS Curriculum in the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) of tertiary institutions. Some LMS platforms do not align well with the existing curriculum and learning materials used in CRS, posing difficulties in seamless integration.

Furthermore, according to Adeyemi (2020), limited training and professional development are key hindrances to effective integration. A lack of ongoing training opportunities for educators can hinder their ability to use ICT and LMS in their teaching effectively. Without proper training, educators may struggle to leverage these technologies to enhance their curriculum and engage students effectively. Similarly, professional development programs often do not address the specific needs related to teaching Christian Religious Studies, resulting in a disconnect between available resources and pedagogical relevance.

In another discovery by Obi (2017), resistance to change could constitute a major hindrance to ICT and LMS in the teaching process. Cultural and institutional resistance to adopting new technologies can pose significant challenges. Many educators and students may prefer traditional teaching methods and view ICT and LMS as unnecessary or cumbersome. This resistance can limit the potential for innovative teaching practices and diminish the overall effectiveness of technology in education.

Ultimately, while integrating ICT and LMS into the teaching of Christian Religious Studies presents immense opportunities, it is essential to acknowledge and address the challenges. By understanding the obstacles, stakeholders can work collaboratively to develop targeted solutions that facilitate the effective use of technology in enhancing educational outcomes within Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Benefits of Using ICT and LMS in Teaching Christian Religious Studies

Despite the challenges of using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Learning Management Systems (LMS) in teaching Christian Religious Studies (CRS), the integration of the tools offers numerous benefits, some of which are discussed below. With focused steps at overcoming the challenges through comprehensive training, curriculum alignment, and investment in infrastructure, the full potential of ICT and LMS in enhancing CRS education can be realized, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes. The following are some derivable benefits of using ICT and LMS in teaching CRS in tertiary institutions in Nigeria:

In a study conducted by Oluwaseun (2021), it was discovered that stakeholders in the tertiary education sector could have better access to diverse resources. In other words, ICT and LMS facilitate access to a wide range of religious texts, resources, and scholarly materials, enriching the learning experience for students. Accessibility to sources ordinarily requiring heavy monetary and time-consuming investment could be profitably reduced. Similarly, Uzoma (2020), opined that students' academic engagement could be better enhanced by integrating ICT into their curriculum. Accordingly, the interactive nature of ICT and LMS can capture students' attention more effectively than traditional teaching methods. Multimedia presentations, discussion forums, and virtual group projects encourage active participation and collaboration, promoting a deeper understanding of the material.

Another benefit of integrating ICT and LMS in Nigerian tertiary institutions' teaching and

learning process is the facilitation of Flexible Learning Environments. With technology, students can learn at their own pace and schedule. This flexibility allows for differentiated learning experiences that cater to individual student needs, enhancing their ability to absorb and retain the information presented (Salami, 2021).

ICT tools facilitate improved communication between educators and students and among peers (Nwosu, 2022). This connectivity fosters a learning community where students can share insights, ask questions, and collaborate on assignments, leading to a more comprehensive educational experience.

Continuous assessment and feedback a key aspect of any academic endeavour's teaching and learning experiences. LMS provides seamless opportunities for an easier mode of assessment and feedback. It is a platform that provides options for ongoing evaluation through quizzes, discussions, and assignments, allowing educators to track student progress easily. Instant feedback can guide students' learning journey and help educators adjust their instructional strategies accordingly (Adeyinka, 2021). In summary, while integrating ICT and LMS into Christian Religious Studies education in Nigerian tertiary institutions is challenging, the potential benefits are significant. Addressing the obstacles mentioned earlier while capitalizing on the advantages will be essential for modernizing education in this critical area and enhancing the overall learning experience for students.

Success stories of ICT and LMS integration in Teaching CRS in Some Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Nigerian higher institutions are not far from fully integrating ICT and LMS in the academic sector. There are, however, impressive stories of success in schools that have implemented the use of the technologies. For instance, successful implementation from Redeemer's University and Covenant University have been recorded. A specific integration of the technologies in teaching Christian Religious Studies (CRS) in institutions is a good example. Below are some key points from these success stories:

Redeemer's University

Redeemer's University (RUN) is a private Christian university in Ede, Osun State, Nigeria. The university was established in 2005 by the Redeemed Christian Church of God. The university aims to provide a holistic education combining academic excellence and moral and spiritual development. It offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs across various faculties, including basic medical sciences, engineering, humanities, law, management, natural, and social sciences. The National Universities Commission of Nigeria officially recognises the university, ensuring its programs meet national educational standards. Significantly, the university is known for its commitment to research and innovation, particularly through its African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases (ACEGID), established in 2013. With a student population of around 3,000 to 4,000, Redeemer's University emphasizes a supportive learning environment and has effectively adopted a Learning Management System (LMS) to organize and deliver CRS courses. This system allows for a structured and consistent approach to course content, assessments, and communication.

Covenant University

Covenant University is a prominent private Christian university located in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. The university was established in 2002 by the Living Faith Church Worldwide (Winners' Chapel). It is one of the leading institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. The university offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs across various disciplines, including

engineering, business, social sciences, and humanities. The university boasts a well-equipped campus with modern facilities, including a library, sports complex, and various recreational amenities. The University has implemented a blended learning approach, combining traditional face-to-face teaching with online components. This approach provides flexibility and accommodates different learning styles. Similarly, the institution has invested in comprehensive training programs for educators to enhance their digital literacy and competency in using LMS and other ICT tools. The effort ensures that teachers can effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices. Furthermore, the university has a reliable ICT infrastructure, including high-speed internet access and modern computer labs, to support the seamless integration of LMS and other digital tools in CRS education.

The success stories from Redeemer's University and Covenant University demonstrate the significant potential of ICT and LMS in enhancing CRS education. Other Nigerian tertiary institutions can achieve similar positive outcomes by addressing the challenges and implementing recommended strategies.

Strategies for Overcoming Challenges in ICT and LMS Integration

To effectively harness the benefits of ICT and LMS in teaching Christian Religious Studies, it is crucial to implement targeted strategies that address the identified challenges. Below are specific strategies to aid better access to the benefits of integrating ICT and LMS in teaching Christian Religious Studies:

Comprehensive Training Programs: Developing and providing ongoing professional development opportunities for educators is essential. These programs should focus on the technical aspects of using ICT and LMS and pedagogical strategies that incorporate these tools into the curriculum. Training sessions tailored to

the specific needs of teaching Christian Religious Studies will empower educators to utilize technology more effectively in their teaching practices.

Curriculum Alignment: Ensuring that LMS platforms and digital resources are compatible with existing curriculum requirements is vital. Educational institutions should collaborate with content developers to create or adapt materials that align with learning objectives for Christian Religious Studies. This will help facilitate a seamless integration of technology and support educators in delivering relevant content.

Quality Assurance for Online Resources: Establishing guidelines for evaluating online religious content's reliability and academic integrity will help build trust among educators and students. Institutions can curate a list of approved digital resources that meet quality standards, providing a reliable foundation for teaching and learning.

Encouraging a Culture of Innovation: Addressing resistance to change requires fostering an institutional culture that encourages technological exploration and experimentation. Institutions can promote a positive attitude towards embracing digital tools by highlighting successful case studies and celebrating educators who effectively integrate ICT and LMS into their teaching.

Engagement of Stakeholders: Collaborating with key stakeholders, including educators, students, and administrators, is crucial for developing a shared vision for integrating technology in education. Regular feedback and involvement of these groups in decision-making processes can ensure that the solutions implemented are relevant and effective. By adopting these strategies, Nigerian tertiary institutions can overcome challenges, enhance the integration of ICT and LMS in

Christian Religious Studies, and ultimately improve educational outcomes for students in this important field.

Interactive Learning Environments: The thoughts of Adediran (2019) in his *Interactive Learning Environments in Higher Education* are apt here. The author emphasizes that ICT and LMS technologies create interactive and engaging learning environments, which can significantly enhance student participation and understanding. By incorporating multimedia content and discussion forums, these technologies facilitate a more dynamic and interactive approach to learning. This helps in making the educational experience more engaging and accessible, ultimately leading to better comprehension and retention of the material among students in Christian Religious Studies (CRS).

Personalized Learning Paths: The integration of Learning Management Systems (LMS) platforms in education, including Christian Religious Studies (CRS) in Nigerian tertiary institutions, offers significant advantages. One such benefit, as highlighted by Babalola (2018), is the ability to create personalized learning paths. These tailored educational experiences cater to students' diverse needs and learning styles, thereby making the learning process more effective and efficient. Personalised learning paths within LMS platforms allow educators to customize course materials, assessments, and interactive activities based on individual student profiles. This approach accommodates different learning paces and preferences and enhances student engagement and motivation. By leveraging these technologies, educators can provide a more adaptive and responsive educational environment that supports better learning outcomes.

Ultimately, while integrating LMS platforms in CRS education in Nigerian tertiary institutions offers more personalized and effective learning experiences, overcoming the associated challenges is essential to harness these benefits fully.

Recommendations

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, enhancing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Learning Management Systems (LMS) is crucial for effective teaching and learning of CRS. Below are key recommendations to improve infrastructure, training, collaboration, quality assurance, and foster a culture of innovation within educational institutions.

1. Increase Investment in ICT Infrastructure: Government and institutional investments should focus on improving internet access and stable electricity supply to enhance the usability of ICT and LMS tools.

2. Comprehensive Training Programs: Implement training programs for educators on the effective use of ICT and LMS in teaching CRS, addressing both technical skills and pedagogical strategies

3. Collaboration with Technology Providers: Encourage cooperation between tertiary institutions and technology providers to develop or customize LMS platforms that align with the CRS curriculum and learning materials

4. Quality Assurance Guidelines: Establish quality assurance guidelines for online religious content to foster trust among educators and students in the reliability and academic integrity of digital resources

5. Promote a Culture of Innovation: Introduce policies and incentives to promote a culture of innovation and openness to change within educational institutions,

encouraging the integration of ICT and LMS as standard practices.

Conclusion

The integration of ICT and LMS in teaching Christian Religious Studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions offers promising opportunities to enhance learning experiences and administrative efficiency. Despite challenges such as limited internet access, insufficient funding, and resistance to change, successful examples from institutions like Redeemer's University and Covenant University demonstrate the potential for overcoming these barriers through innovative solutions and strategic partnerships. By increasing investment in ICT infrastructure, providing comprehensive training, and fostering collaboration and quality assurance, Nigerian tertiary institutions can harness the full potential of ICT and LMS in advancing the teaching and learning of Christian Religious Studies.

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