

Information and Communication Technology: Application, Use and Assessment in Three selected Theological Schools in Jos, Plateau state

By

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the information and communication technology resources applied in theological schools and the constraints being experienced in the use of these resources. The study adopted a descriptive survey method through random sampling of respondents.

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed and 295 received. The study found out that the theological schools in Jos have made significant progress in embracing and implementing ICT tools for their academic development. The teaching of ICT skills for students, the use of Facebook, Twitter and blogs and other social media services are some of the significant achievements. It was noted that the awareness of the use of various IT applications and other media among the students of the selected theological colleges in Jos is satisfactory. The study recommends that ICT training and education should be core part of the curriculum in the training of the students and the staff as most are ignorant of ICT resources and how they can be applied for private and public benefits.

Key Words: Information, Communication, Technology Resources, Theology, Tools, Application

Introduction

Information and communication technology or technologies (ICT) is an umbrella term that include devices like radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network, hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them such as video conferencing and distance learning. ICT are often spoken of in a particular context, such as ICT in education, health care or libraries. In their recognition of the way information technology (IT) revolution became so extensive (Kumar and Kar, "Library computerization: an inexpensive approach") proposed that, it is highly unlikely that any sphere on earth will be left untouched by it.

Ukodie further acceded to this fact that, information and communication technology has proven itself and has been accepted as the engine of the 21st century and beyond. The rapid rate at which ICT have evolved since mid-20th century and the convergence phenomenon in which all existing technologies have been harmonized by ICT, in addition to their pervasiveness and intensiveness in all areas of human activities, gives ICT a leading edge in development and globalization, (Ukodie, "*ICON of ICT in Nigeria: Their passion, vision and thoughts. Lagos*"). The phenomenal development with regard to ICTs is having significant impact on all areas of human endeavor (Brakel and Chisenga 476-486). Economic, political, social,

education, communication and other areas of our lives have been greatly affected by ICT. Therefore, since churches are part of the information community, it is necessary to investigate how information communication technologies are used in a church and other Christian organizations.

The advent of computer and other attendant resource like the internet has led congregations using computer technologies to enhance and promote traditional ministries: worship, fellowship, pastoral care, education, mission and community outreach, evangelism and communications. Its significant benefits make it fitting for ministry. (Paultler, “*Why We Use Technology*”) noted that technology has played a huge part in the spread of Christianity throughout history. The first pews were introduced to churches in the 13th century. The first organ was installed in 1361. In 1436, Gutenberg invented the printing press, revolutionizing the spread of the Bible. Microphones, electricity and speakers were all introduced in the 18th to 20th centuries. Only in the last 100 or so years were radios and TVs invented. John Brust cited by Paultler (2010) said, “the Church needs to keep up with what is going on; the church needs to be as current as anything else out there; otherwise you will not reach the new generation.” Byrne’s (2005) article titled *counselor: Digital age poses pastoral challenges to church* says it all. He pointed out that, three different communication eras now exist in the same church community, posing a myriad of leadership issues for today’s “five-generation” church because of technological

and digital divides. Williams pointed out that, preachers are struggling with the challenges and potentials of new technologies (14-17). This is because most preachers learnt reading texts cover to cover. However, new technologies have great potential for enhancing their education, transmitting the gospel and creating Christian wisdom in the new information age. A better way to change this is the use of information and communication technology. In this days and age, relationships and communication within extended relationships are changing at a rapidly increasing rate.

Tan noted that, social networking has to become part of pastoral ministry or the church will find itself increasingly marginalized in the lives of digital natives (37-44). Ministers are called to engage today’s technology and recognize and foster mutuality, inter-dependence, empathy, solidarity and collaboration with digital natives. They should not be afraid to take advantage of new technologies of their time. There is precedent for this, as evidenced by the examples of Apostle Paul and the Protestant reformer, Martin Luther King.

(Williams, 14-17) observed that, the use of technology allows for the church’s ministry to be done with greater adaptability and speed. He points out that, information and communication technology changes people’s perception and relationships by describing what he calls “my technological life in a typical week”

While efficiency should not be the sole aim of church work, using technology better focuses much of the structural and planning conversations that need to take place in any

church life. Pope Benedict in January 2010 announced that, for the 44th communications day, the theme would be “The Priest and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World: New Media at the Service of the Word.” In the announcement, Pope Benedict cited by Paultler (2010) said, “using new communication technologies, priests can introduce people to the life of the church and help our contemporaries to discover the face of Christ.”

Armstrong et al. (7-14) stated that, congregations are using computer technology primarily in these areas: administration and finance, communications, learning laboratory and multimedia presentations for worship and education.

Theology is a term that has no single definition. Over the years different people have defined this term based on their conceptual framework and understanding. Hodge (*“Outlines of Theology”*) is of the opinion that theology is an English word derived from two Greek words signifying “discourse concerning God and man, and concerning God and man’s relationship to Him. According to Tan (37-44), theology has some unique characteristics, which made it different from other disciplines of education; it is unique because it grows out of the encounter with God. Galadima (27-35) and Oketunji (“Forty years of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Library Service to the Nation”) maintain that theology is traditionally considered to be the task of academically trained Christian scholars. These scholars share one thing in common, publication of scholarly works, which contribute to knowledge. These

definitions based on scientific approach and scholarship is relevant to this study because library resources of any academic centre are part of repositories that encourage research activities and scholarly publications. Oketunji (“Forty years of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Library Service to the Nation”) has observed that the essence of a sound theological knowledge is to enable the trainee to think and act reflectively on their acquired knowledge and to have self-control rather than externally imposed control. The establishment and survival of good theological institutions in Nigeria is fundamental to the spiritual and intellectual soundness of the entire nation and if poor theological education is tolerated, it will lead to weak spiritual foundations and spiritual chaos, which in turn will lead to a lawless, undisciplined, corrupt society and that will lead to lack of peace and tranquility as well as ungodly behavior in society. A good theological institution, according to Bailey (15-23.) can provide an environment for biblical, theological and ministry training, while allowing for personal reflection under the direction and encouragement of highly skilled and caring mentors (scholars) that few people can find outside the college experience. Owoh (1986) stated that the Church views education as the instrument through which certain values and goals are acquired and propagated. The acquisition of these values and goals is an expression of human personality, and the search for these values and goals is to learn and understand, because the individual does not possess comprehensive knowledge,

(Owoh, “The Church’s Participation in Development: The Issues of a Theoretical Framework and Strategy.”). He further stated that education strengthens the feeling of responsibility to the community and at the same time strengthens individual will power. Education makes the conscience sensitive to social and intellectual truth. It imparts some power of discrimination between good and evil, between reality and superstition. Therefore, the Church’s contribution to development through education is an attempt to lead and liberate the community. Needless to stress that education is an instrument through which God, as the source of ultimate knowledge, love, and solidarity uses to speak to the community.

According to Byrne (*Campus and community Resources-Bethel Seminary*), a critical examination of the religious climate makes a strong case for the development of sound theological knowledge, especially with the attendant eruption of violence in different parts of the globe. He opined that the training of church ministers must take cognizance of the characteristics and challenges of the religiously pluralistic society in which they will operate. They should be well equipped in theological knowledge for the task ahead of them and this includes exposure to standard libraries and their resources. Ngufuwan has expressed the view that there are challenges like theological corruption, which deal with the distortion of some biblical doctrines by the Church (Ngufuwan, “Greed for Wealth and the Christian”). These are challenges that theological institutions need to address in their curriculum so that

theology as part of the whole intellectual enterprise of mankind can stand in relation to other disciplines. The library collection therefore, should be reflective of the various subjects in theological institutions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to assess the application of ICT in selected theological schools in Jos. The paper’s objectives are to study the implementation of ICT in the Schools, to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of library services using ICT, and to identify the use of various ICT tools as theological Instructional materials.

Significance of the Study

Researchers in the field of theology, religion, librarianship etc. and proprietors, students, management team of theological institutions and librarians, need to be aware of problems connected with theological information disseminations through researches like this. This study will provide essential source material to enable them take more appropriate steps towards arresting the obstacles against the provision of balanced and up-to-date information and library resources in theological institutions.

The recommendation(s) made will enable students and staff in theological institutions improves their ICT skills and services. It will also help management to provide good leadership and policies that will encourage prompt acquisition and use of ICT resources in their institutions libraries. The study will draw the attention of these institutions on the need to budget adequate funds for the acquisition of more resources. This study will also serve as a reference material for future researchers who are

interested in theological librarianship and special libraries. And will stimulate research interests in this topic and other related topics. The study will also guide librarians of theological schools towards providing solutions to problems, which may emanate from libraries operating outside acceptable standards. Moreover, the study will be a useful contribution to literature in the field of library and information science, religious studies, theology, information and communication technology etc. Besides, it is hoped that this research work will serve as a guiding document, a useful reference material for theological schools in developing countries. The conceptual and theoretical framework discussed below in the literature review can serve as reference point for future researchers.

Literature Review

The current global information environment is so rich, but characterized by proliferation of sources, multiplicity of methods of access and redundancy of contents. In this “explosive” information environment, many users tend to experience a sense of inadequacy and anxiety. Such as how do individual navigate through the complex landscape of information? How do individual assess the information they find as being enough to satisfy their specific need? Understanding how individual choose to meet urgent information needs and insight into information seeking behavior of users. Prabha (“Satisfying Information needs”) stated that, “the library and information science literatures has neglected to study how individual decide what and how-much information is enough to

meet their needs or goals.

The complexity of needs makes it crucial for information seekers to decide what information is enough to meet their objectives. Here, satisfying student’s information needs in theology school libraries should be primary objectives of libraries and librarians. Every year new students come to colleges with different needs and expectations. New technologies, databases, and more renovate system for accessing information have made the libraries more complicated and challenging for librarians and the users alike. The inability to easily identify specific needs, the abundance of resources and difficulties in evaluation also create problems and dissatisfaction for users.

Applegate (“*Impact of a Library collections and user Satisfaction*”) defines user’s satisfaction as “a personal, emotional reaction to a library service or product”. Issa suggested that “user’s satisfaction consist of service encounter satisfaction. And overall service satisfaction of the user is based on all encounters and experience with that particular system” (Issa, “*Effects of Information Literacy Skills on the Use of E-Library Resources among Students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria*”). In addition, a characteristic of service delivery is the simultaneous nature of production and consumption (Zeithaml and Bitner, “*Customers Contributions and roles in service delivery*”). Norliya and Khasiah (“*Users perceptions on the contributions of UiTM Libraries in creating a Learning Environment*”) stated that in meeting the students’ information needs, the libraries must provide current resources, operate flexible

opening hours, staff should be very opened, friendly and knowledgeable. The staff should attend more workshops and be acquainted with new development. Norliya and Haslinda (“Assessing customer satisfaction on library services and activities in creating a learning environment”) stated that “librarians should also do research on users focus and users satisfaction. He added that the library statistic is traditionally collected and can be turned into continuous research for the improvement of the library. The facilities, collections, services and activities of the library can be upgraded and improved upon from time to time.

There are several studies carried out to examine the impact of implementation of ICT in academic libraries. According to a study by Krubu and Osawaru among Nigerian University Libraries, there is remarkable rise in the use of ICT, many of the library activities are now ICT driven (Krubu and Osawaru, “*The Impact of Information and Communication Technology ICT in Nigerian University Libraries*”). This has increased the speed and ease of acquisition, processing, storage, retrieval and dissemination operations.

Libraries as Information Repository for Gospel Preachers

Libraries and information centers are service points, especially in the theology libraries. It is an established fact that before a library could be classified as properly functioning, its services should encompass the dissemination of both solicited and unsolicited information. Haranda in his work “*Information for Industry in Nigeria: library philosophy and practice*” asserted that the main objective of the library is to support the business by providing access to

all relevant published information and to internally record and report information. One of the major purpose of the libraries is to support the mission and vision of theological schools by providing resources and services for the instructional and research needs of the students. Theological colleges are ecumenically – oriented institutions and the collection should reflect the non-sectarian mission of the school. The collections focuses on the core materials necessary for Christian ministerial education, critical thinking, historical understanding and ethical judgment.

Information provision and services in these libraries means rendering assistance to users with knowledge that is beneficial to their activities. Information services must be geared towards improving productivity and capacity development of theology libraries in Nigeria (Haranda, 2009). A report of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA, A report of the economic commission for Africa on information services, library philosophy and practice.) emphasizes two forms of information services.

The first service is concerned with improving production and innovation capabilities, such as:

1. Concerns production layouts, quality standards and maintenance.
2. Providing relevant information (service) for technology development, and launching co-operative joint operation of large-scale and expansive equipment testing of raw materials
3. Training of entrepreneurs and workers.

The library, therefore, stands as a viable medium through which information can be passed across to the users. Yusuf (“*Effective communication for reference services delivery in academic*”) described the place of library in

information provision as the laboratory where users discover new truth and that if we can only provide well-equipped laboratories, important truth will soon be discovered. However, this is not entirely true as real discoveries are actually made in the library and subsequently tested out in the laboratory.

If the libraries are to play their role in the theological institution activities creditably, they must possess adequate and appropriate information resources and services; give user-oriented services such as selective dissemination of information (SDI), current awareness services, indexing and abstracting services, inter-library loans and so on. They must also facilitate maximum provision of information to their users by giving out and receiving information resources from other libraries (Haranda, *"Information for Industry in Nigeria: library philosophy and practice"*).

In order to adequately provide relevant information to their students, policy making should be the major priority of the library. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all users understand their privileges and responsibilities in relation to the computer, network and internet resources provided by the schools. Violation of this policy may result in suspension of privileges and or other disciplinary actions as set out in the catalog and the libraries blueprints. The libraries should provide audio-visual materials: they should also have audio cassettes and video cassettes available on various subjects in theology. Users may also choose to check out videos for a one-week loan period. Students and staff families may borrow video materials by paying token fee.

The library should also hold in their collections,

journals titles on theology. The library should display the most current issue of the journals in the library catalogue as well as a separate listing available in the journal display shelves, computer workstation and circulation desk. The libraries also hold many journals in microfiche format, books, thesis, dissertations and other materials are supposed to be available in microfiche or micro film format. Information and reference service should be available Mondays through Fridays during service library hours. There are supposed to be computer stations available to students in every section of the library especially in the reference section. These computer stations should have internet capabilities, CD ROM database searching, as well as micro-soft office programs.

Internet Resources: Repositioning Libraries

With the collection of media other than books for preserving information, many libraries are now repositories for non-print materials and artworks stored on variety of media such as microfilm, microfiche, audio tapes, compact discs (CDs), long programmes (LPs), Cassettes, Video tapes and digital versatile disc (DVDs), and subscription to databases and the Internet. Thus modern libraries are increasingly being redefined as repositories to access information in different formats and sources. In addition to providing materials, the libraries also provide the services of specialists who are experts in sourcing, organizing and disseminating information in addition to interpreting information needs. Libraries are now understood to be beyond physical walls of buildings, by acquiring materials accessible by electronic means, and seeking for the services of librarians in navigating and analyzing large

information with variety of digital tools (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2012).

In the opinion of Igwebuike (*"Information Literacy: Origin, Characteristics and Processes"*) modern library functionality has gone beyond the use of only print and non-print materials in information service. Current practices must involve new information technology devices. Libraries with these modern devices download information from Internet. The Internet services offers full text (some with audio and video) database of journals, books, newsletters, standards, theses and dissertations. Digital (electronic or virtual) libraries are paperless in content; they have all their stock in electronic format. Users of electronic libraries download all needed information from the Internet; only few theological libraries are already benefiting. A virtual library, in the opinion of Achebe, is a library in which a number of different information sources and resources are brought to the end users through electronic networks; it has no wall but the collections have boundaries (Achebe, *"Concept of the library"*). It is also telecommunication technology- driven, research oriented sources and resources that enable scholars to obtain timely and up-to-the-minute information in any subject area. In the views of Serema and Mooko (*"Types of Library Resources."*), the Internet is a good example of a non-print reference source. It is also often referred to as an "information highway" because of its capability to transmit a vast amount of information to anybody anywhere in the world. Internet provides facilities like electronic mail, telnet, online searching, electronic publishing and user groups. It is

assumed that in this age of technology all theological libraries in Nigeria are supposed to have Internet connectivity to assist users with variety of information needs.

Electronic Resources in Theological Libraries

Apart from print resources, an ideal library is expected to also stock electronic resources as part of its collection. But the findings of this research work revealed that majority of the theological libraries in Jos were without electronic resources. Brown (*"Library data, statistics, and information"*) observed that computer based support systems have now made it equally feasible to describe electronic resources in terms of intellectual content, relevance to target groups, accessibility, availability and utilization and that librarians should evaluate not only the resources under the library's control but also those resources available through networks and social networks. Brown also suggested that librarians should provide Internet and e-mail services as means of accessibility of information to the library users. From the findings of this study the opinion of Brown is not fully obtained and practiced in these institutions in North Central States in Nigeria. The American, New Zealand Theological Library Association ANZTLA (Standards: Ratified at the Association's annual general meeting July, 2000) emphasized standards for collection development to comprise all types of recorded information in print and non-prints, with access to electronic databases, CD-ROMs and other electronic resources. These Standards by the American, New Zealand Theological Library Association (ANZTLA) are reflected only in the printed resources in these institutions studied while

electronic is absent. Adedeji (*"Information society on the Internet"*) has written that emerging information and communication technologies (ICTs) have greatly influenced the education process and in some cases replaced the traditional models of scholarship. He also emphasized on the need for all libraries to make use of all available and relevant technology including electronic and data processing and telecommunication systems because they help to provide a host of services to the library users (this includes theological libraries). Lack of electronic resources in some theological libraries as unveiled by this study is something of concern and need to be addressed by those in-charge of theological institutions in this zone of study.

Methodology

This research is a descriptive survey done by random sampling. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed and 295 were collected and analyzed.

The study was conducted in three selected schools in Jos namely: School of Biblical Studies (SBS), Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN), and Jos ECWA Theological School (JETS). The researcher collected the necessary data needed for the study in order to draw inference about the variables.

Setting

The main aim of this study is to evaluate the use of ICT in theological Institutions in Jos, Plateau state. There are more than 18 theological colleges in Plateau state. The study does not reveal the results of individual school performance with regard to application of ICT for their (library) services. However, for this study the author selected three theological schools based on the following criteria:

- A degree awarding and post graduate theological institution.
- A flexible library catalogue.
- Provision of Internet services/facilities and or subscription to online databases (such as ATLA Religion Database with Serials, JSTOR, etc.)

Based on the above criteria, the following institutions were selected for this study.

- School of Biblical Studies (SBS)
- Theological College Of Northern Nigeria (TCNN), and
- Jos ECWA Theological School (JETS)

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the demography of participants and Table 2 shows names of the colleges and number of respondents who participated in the study.

Table 1. Categories of Students

Categories of Students	No. of Participants	%
Doctoral students	12	4.1
MA/BD students	132	44.7
Diploma students	105	35.6
Certificate Students	46	14.9
Total	295	100.0

Table 2. Names of the Colleges

Names of the Colleges	No. of Respondents	%
TCNN	145	49.2
JETS	46	15.6
SBS	104	35.2
Total	295	100.0

Table 3. Application of ICT in Theological Schools

Quality	No. of Respondents	%
Average	65	22.0
Excellent	53	18.0
Good	168	56.9
Poor	9	3.1
Total	295	100.0

This study reveals (see Table 3) that 57% of respondents rated the theological schools as good in terms of use of ICT, while 22% of respondents say that use of ICT facilities in the Schools is average and 18% of respondents opined it is excellent.

ICT Skills for Students: - the use of ICT in theological institutions offers avenue for students to acquire skills for sourcing

information in this digital era. Based on the study, students who participated in the survey confirmed that the selected theological schools provided opportunity for Students to learn skills in ICT. The result of this study recognizes the need to create more opportunities for students to learn ICT skills in order to take advantage of the benefit of digital world.

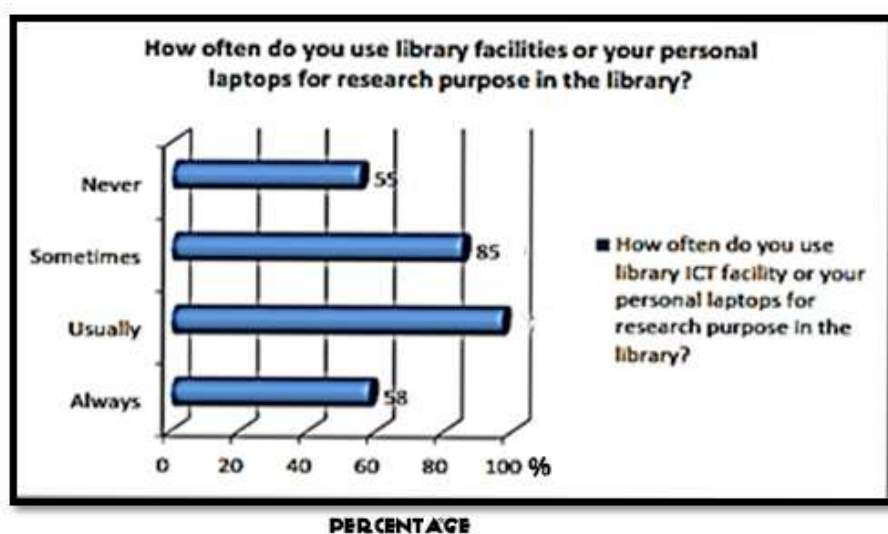
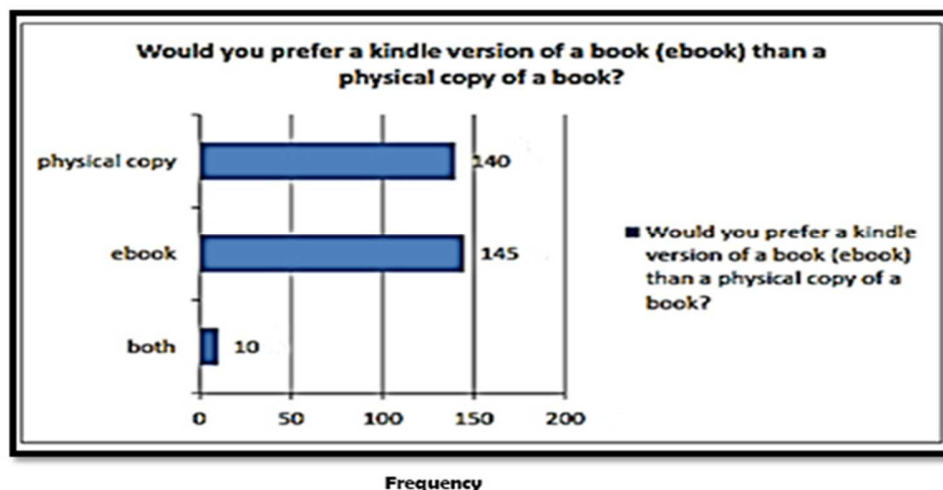
Chart 1: Frequency of the Use of ICT Facilities

Chart 1 shows how frequent students use the ICT facilities in the selected Theological libraries. This study indicates that only 18% of the respondents have never used their library ICT facilities for their research purpose.

Chart 2: Choice of Format of Book



eBooks Vs Physical Books: -the impact of the ICT revolution on the younger generation has led them to be more oriented to digital resources and to be able to access information through their electronic devices. The study also noted that approximately 145 or 50% of users prefer an eBook over a physical copy of a book. This indicates there is a growing

interest and awareness among users preferring digital book than the conventional print copy of a book. There are lots of factors contributing to this trend. Major among is the increase in the digital trend and awareness, students of the current generation are more exposed to new technologies.

Table 4. What are the major benefits derived from using online resources and services?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Time saving	28	14.0
More informative	57	28.5
More useful	52	26.0
Speedy delivery	42	21.0
Less Expensive	21	10.5
Total	200	100.0

The major benefits derived from using online resources as agreed by the respondents are that it is more informative. 57 (28.5%) strongly agreed to that. 28 (14%) asserted that it saves

time, 52 (26%) said it was more useful. On the speedy delivery, 42 (21%) concurred. However, 21 (10.5%) agreed that it is less expensive to access.

Chart 3: Suggestions Made by Students

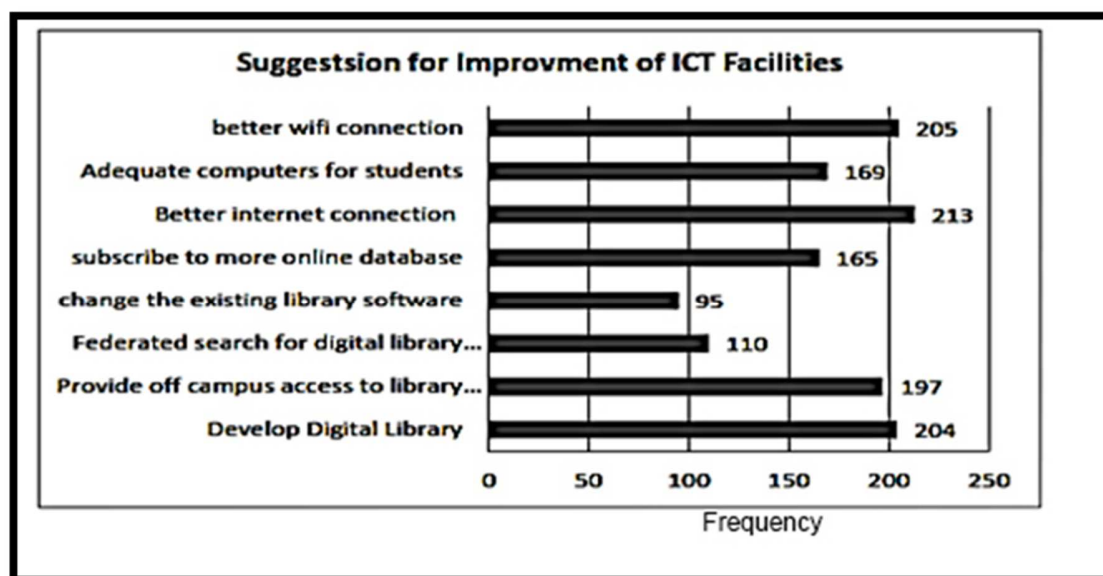


Chart 4. Shows suggestions made by students regarding the future improvement of ICT facilities in the Schools. According to students, three major concerns are inevitable for the future: - the need for good bandwidth Internet connection for the library, better wireless Internet connectivity for laptops and the general development of digital library.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study discovered that the theological Schools in Jos have made significant progress in embracing and implementing ICT tools for their academic purposes. The teaching of ICT skills for students, the use of Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Blogs and other (social) media services are some of the significant achievements. It was noted that the awareness

of the use of various IT applications and other media among the students of the selected theological colleges in Jos is encouraging.

Theological schools build capacity and provide support and training for effective use of digital and other information resources (Byrne, "Campus and community Resources-Bethel Seminary"). This potential can be exploited by integrating ICTs in the management of theological schools and information centers. Application of ICTs will enhance access to information and maximize benefits for the schools. Digitization should be given the priority in theological libraries, while Librarians and information scientist with the professional and technical know-how be encourage to identify, evaluate, organize and classify information for teaching and

research purposes. Therefore, collaboration between ICT professionals and librarians in theological institutions will give better result in web content development. Application of ICT in theological library management will provide ideal access for meeting the information needs of users. It is noted by Adedeji (“Information society on the Internet”) that higher education libraries have been among the first of the communications systems and academic units to be shaken to its philosophical foundation and compelled in all ramification of its practice to embrace the deluge of emerging technologies. He further informed that the presence of these technologies has shifted the role and scope of libraries, librarians and library schools and that more importantly these has positively enhanced their performances, it has led to effective information management through the development of databases, which constitute the bulk of offline resources.

This information on library activities has revealed the significance of information technology in the development of a library. However, Oketunji (“Forty years of Information and Communication Technology - ICT, Library Service to the Nation”) has observed that the major problem faced by students in the effective utilization of information communication technology (ICT) is electricity supply. Others are social problems which include illiteracy, cultural barriers, lack of computer skills and technological know-how, and lack of access to computer. Issues of concern even in Africa in respect to the provision of ICT are Internet connectivity, inadequate ICT

facilities, technical know-how, bandwidth and digital gap and national priorities. The reviews above are relevant to this study as availability of information technology facilities are very critical for accurate information dissemination.

Hence, the following recommendations were made from the study:-

- ICT training and education should become a core part of the curriculum in theology schools where Gospel preachers are trained.
- Theological Schools should seek to conduct in-house training on ICT for their staff.
- The school leaderships should expose their students to the use of ICT and its multiple benefits.
- Students and staff should be encouraged to buy personal computers and use it in their studies and teaching through provision of loans and support by the schools.
- Schools should make purchase of ICT infrastructure and its development a deliberate policy for students, staff and their libraries.
- Most importantly, theological schools should make effort to digitize their libraries.

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