



CHALLENGES AND PROSPECT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ON HISTORICAL RESEARCH STUDIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a force that has change many aspect of research across various disciplines in the world owing to new information and communication technologies (ICTs) its provides which made it a necessity and potential powerful tool for research that one cannot do without it aid. As such through primary and secondary sources, this paper examines the challenges and prospect of ICT on Historical Research Studies in the 21st century. The paper argues that in as much as ICT is one of the most prominent and efficient tools for historical research studies in the reconstruction of human past experiences and activities owing to its provision of multi-source materials to the researcher, storage materials and the mechanism, time saving and energy in the course of research, opportunities for easy access to chat and discussion forum which lead to exchange and dissemination of knowledge within the context of academic discourse. ICT still pose serious challenges to historical methodology, the discipline and historians owing to multi-source materials which can confused the researcher on choice of key documents. More so, some of the internet materials lacked editor(s), plus non control of the inflow and outflow of the information uploaded or downloaded. Therefore, the paper recommend that historians should be caution in use of ICT by corroborating it with other historical sources to ensure objectivity in their findings.

KEY WORDS: Challenges, History, ICT, Prospect, Research Studies

INTRODUCTION

History is synonymous with change; that is why E.H. Carr defines it as a continuous process of interaction between the historians and his facts, and an unending dialogue between the present and the past (Carr, 2006:1). This definition show that history is the study of why societies have change in the past for the conscious transformation of the present, so as to secure a better future. Hence, history is summarily viewed from two (2) directions, that is; **History as a process** and **History as a study**. **History as a process** sees History as the totality of human interaction in the society over time. This interaction occurs within a context and not in a vacuum. Part of the ingredients of History as a process lies in the fact that, History is continuous in nature and it occurs within time and space. **History as a study** on the other hand, is the academic attempt at explaining the historical process. It is the attempt at x-raying the human past existence over time. History as a study can only be successful through the reliance on the evidences (sources) of the human past. These sources ranged from electronic materials, newspapers, letters, ethnographic accounts, travelers accounts, archival sources etc. Very recently, history is viewed not only as a collection of facts about the past, but as a vibrant field that construct various, sometimes competing understandings about our own society. In other word, as a profession, history seek to uncover



some truth about why the past was the way it was, and in some cases how it influences why today is the way it is, and in actualizing that, the need for ICT in historical studies emerge.

Besides, the world today, has turn out to be a “Global Village” owing to Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These things have become a force that has changed many aspects of human endeavours and likewise impacts on the methodology of various fields such as archaeology, geology, tourism, medicine, business, banking, engineering, architecture and history which is the central focus of this paper. This is because information is one of the most important if not the most important tools or raw materials needed for objective historical research studies; for it provides an enabling environment for historian brain storming. But despite that, just as no historical source is said to be innocent, ICT is not an exception, in other words, the availability of prospects in an innovation or a system, does not mean the absence of challenges.

Furthermore, throughout the ages, technology has been at the forefront of human development. Whilst it has brought great benefits, there have also been prices to pay, particularly sociological ones. Hence, the developments in ICT have grown exponentially over the last few years and we, as teachers of history and researchers, should look towards its benefits for education whilst cautioning ourselves that it must remain our servant and not our master. There have been many valid criticisms of ‘techno romanticism’ or the ‘Luddite’ mind set of some teachers today. It is obvious that there have to be certain parameters around the assumption that ICT, in all aspects, is a good thing. The cultural capital of the school may conflict with the cultural capital of the home and therefore compromise the possible progress of the student.

More so, history is a vital subject in a modern world where different cultures and traditions have to understand and work with each other, and global citizenship is the reality in our ‘global village.’ There is a vast amount of material available for our use through ICT. Historians no longer rely solely on the written word, but now also have access to film, TV, newspapers, tapes, official papers and access to libraries throughout the world via the Internet. In view of these arguments, the key factor, for history teachers and researchers, is to harness the many possibilities that ICT affords to history teaching and learning. This is the reason I am considering “the challenges and prospect of ICT on historical research studies in the 21st century.” Thus, before we go deep into the discussion, there is need for a literature review and methodology adopted followed by a clear understanding of what ICT, historical research as well as the connection or relationship between them, of which all will do us good in having a smooth flow of our discussion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Notwithstanding, different studies have been done by different scholars in the fields of either History/ICT or the relationship between History and ICT on different parts of the world. That notwithstanding, very scanty or even little attempt has been made to study the challenges and prospects of Historical Research Studies in the 21st Century. Hence most authors tend to focus mostly on the role of ICT in the teaching and learning of history such as Adesote and Fatoki (2013:2155 – 2159) which they affirmed that the new information and communication technologies of internet and multimedia which have led to positive impact in the field of education in most developed countries are still at infancy or not used at all in the classroom instruction in the developing countries. They further that ICTs are potential powerful enabling tools for effective teaching and learning. It also provide additional strategies that can be used to address major educational challenges being faced by teachers and students of History in the 21st century. They



further that ICT can influence and change traditional methods of teaching and learning of History thereby ensuring quality education.

Similarly, British Educational Communication and Technology Agency (BECTA) (2018:1 – 2) in its article stated that, ICT can be used to help pupils of all ages to develop knowledge and skills that history demands. It further that ICT applications can be used to develop specific history skills. Although robust academic research into this area is limited. Therefore, from the above literature review one can see the their central focus was pupils and students of primary and secondary education but the challenges and prospects that ICT effect on historians, history students of higher institution of learning and the discipline as a whole was not addressed and besides, the various issues historians and the discipline faced with advent of ICT in the 21st century was neither fully identity nor solution provided which is the gap that this paper attempts to fulfilled.

METHODOLOGY

Therefore, in terms of source materials, I am informed by nature of the historical development of the subject matter I am dealing with, to select a methodology that is suitable and capable in dealing with the subject under study. Thus, this study was a qualitative study. The data for the study were collected from primary and secondary sources like archival materials, Student Hand book, articles published books and articles related to the topic. Others involve physical observation/field work method and the internet/electronic sources of historical writing in modern days. The major books and theses used in this study were from disciplines of history and ICT. After collecting the data, it is discovered that the challenges and prospect of ICT on historical research studies cannot be over emphasis. This is because the 21st century historians cannot survive in their research without the aid of ICT which provide millions of information within a short seconds. Hence, the historians is exposed to academic criminality and plagiarism, poverty of knowledge and laziness in use of archival and manuscript materials which might contained some vital compared to that of internet. Besides, the use of ICT have medical effect due to long use of the light from the system which could affect the eyes. To this end, the study attempts to answer the question in respect to the challenges and prospect of ICT in historical research in the 21st century.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Information and Communication Technology

Hence, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a concept is the application of computers and telecommunication equipment to store, retrieved, transmits and manipulates data and digital electronics. These make access and assessment of information much easier in this 21st century than previous centuries. Thus, the term ICT is commonly used as a synonym for, Computer (Rieger, 2010:151 & 161; Osakwe, 2012:39 – 40) and Computer Networks, which also encompasses other information distribution technologies such as television and telephones. Likewise, it process includes the organization, collection, storage, retrieval, interpretation and dissemination and the use of information (Daintith, 2012: 5 – 6 & Chafe, 2015: 4 – 5) which make historical research mush easier. More so, ICT as a concept also refers to processing and distribution of data using computer hardware and software, telecommunications, and digital electronics. If ICT is the processing and distribution of data-pieces of information, then it can be said to be of maximum importance to a researcher involved in a historical research studies.



As a matter of fact, advances in ICT have help slash the cost of processing information by almost over 90 percent. Using ICT for research cost the researcher pennies per transaction instead of dollars by traditional methods. Over the last third of the 20th century the real cost of computer processing power fell by 35 percent on average each year. Vast amounts of information can be processed, shared, and stored on a disk or a computer chip, and the cost is continually declining.

ICT power by satellites, allows global television broadcasts to bring news of faraway events, such as wars, national disasters, etc., which constitute part of human endeavors over time. These human endeavors in turn, influences and shapes historical research studies. Information platforms, such as the world wide web, and enables the availability of research materials or sources in large quantity and also make available platforms for publication of historical research studies in a great fast means. This lead to the question of what historical research is.

Historical Research

Historical Research is the systematic collection and objective evaluation of data related to past occurrences in order to test hypothesis (where applicable) concerning causes, effects, or trend of these events that may explain present issues and anticipate future happenings (Faskari, 2008:4 – 5 & Eluwa,, 1988:1 – 25). It seek not only to describe and analyses the past activities of man but to help us understand interactions in the activities of man, as a human being, in time perspectives, in certain conditions and environment (Adeoti & Adeyeri, 2012:36 - 41).

Therefore, with the above concepts one can see the relationships between ICT and historical research which relied on information. Moreover, the aspiration of historical researcher is to get closer to availability of documentary sources which are made available by ICT.

CHALLENGES OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY TO HISTORICAL RESEARCH STUDIES

“The illiterate of the 21st century, will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn (Adesote and O.R. Fatoki, 2013: 2155 - 2159).” This statement pointed out the relevance of ICT revolution in the 21st century historians and historical research studies. But despite its significance there are quite number of challenges it left the historian with especially in terms of critical and careful selection of material/information, corroboration, analyzing and presentation of facts or information, all aiming at the originality, authenticity and reliability which is time consuming. Therefore, below are some of the challenges identified.

1. **Multi-source materials:** ICT provide historians with large sources i.e. to access to variety of information sources inform of e-books, e-journals, articles etc which required a critical assessment and interpretation in order to achieve the objectivity of historical research since some of the information on internet are not that reliable or valid. More so, it is important to strive at understanding the origins of the sources because o matter meticulous the process recovery, interpretation and presentation might be the reconstruction of the past goes beyond mere summing of vast information available on internet or ICT ((Adeoti & Adeyeri, 2012:36 - 41)).

2. **Laziness:** ICT surplus historical raw materials make some historians lazy in terms of reading and consulting of unpublished works, manuscript, archival materials, published books, journals, articles in books, conference papers and seminars which are in hardcopy. These made some historians to develop attitude of shortcut to information or attitude of copying and paste. This develop the temptation of running away from rigorous selection, corroboration, interpretation of sources and analysis of the reality from both the primary or secondary sources which lead to poverty of knowledge on the phenomenon dealing with. In other words, the availability of vast materials reduces the inter-play of the researcher's in-genuity and resourcefulness which is gradually but silently turning historical research studies to a cut and paste exercise.
3. **Poverty of knowledge:** It makes lazy historians to restrict themselves within the information obtain from it and thereby neglecting other sources which contained vital information. For instance, rigorous field trip/survey, oral interviews, and archival records which form part of the flavor of historical research studies and which also helps as a great source in corroboration of information and analysis of data in order to arrive at a concrete result or argument or findings. So that the outcome would not be an empty basket that does not hold a water.
4. **Absence of editor (s), and inflow and outflow of information:** Quite a number of information obtains from IT are not scrutinized. This show lack or absence of editor (s) or editorial work. Therefore, these prevent the control of the inflow and outflow of historical information. Moreover, this result to subjectivity or bias rather than objectivity in historical writing, and in the reconstruction of human past. In other words, these make historical interpretation not to be based on available evidence but on prejudicial basis ((Adeoti & Adeyeri, 2012:40). Moreover, ICT is very wide and vast and with just a click, the researcher is bombarded with variation of materials which now leaves him with the problem of selection. As a matter of facts wrong selection of materials, would likely amount to a historical research studies full of problems.

Furthermore, the researchers are exposed to doctored information. There is no restriction as regards the inflow and outflow of information in the world of ICT and because of these; files or data are doctored leaving the research with a task of thorough corroboration of facts.

5. **Academic Criminality and Plagiarism:** Despite the relevance of ICT on historical research studies, yet it makes most historians to be directly or indirectly a victim of academic criminality and plagiarism. Quite number of them conducts a research but fail to acknowledge the sources of that information they obtain from internet; claiming to be their own thinking or research. Some can even search on the internet to get an already research uploaded, download it and present it to their supervisors as their Degree, Masters or even PhD research topics, once approved they just copy and paste. As such, if this academic criminality is not detected in time, they succeeded. So these make researchers not only in history discipline but other discipline to be researchers of unconscious mind.



6. **Medical Effect:** IT could affect human vision which arises from constant exposure to bright light from the computer system, and most of electronic devices like computer emit radiation. Hence it is likely that constant usage of the computer system may expose one to radiation which has the ability of changing the genetic composition of the biological cell (mutation). It also affects body posture depending on the researcher's body position. In addition, it could result in minor body pains/injury (spasm) which may sometimes last longer or short lived.

PROSPECT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY TO HISTORICAL RESEARCH STUDIES

Nonetheless, looking closely into Information and Communication Technology (ICT) despite the challenges discussed above lies also a prospect in it on the historical research studies which is known to be study which based on the qualitative type of research, time consuming, rigorous and also expensive for

History is seen by many who work in this field as a distinct form of knowledge. It is not only concerned with collecting and memorizing discrete facts about historical events or people, but it requires those studying it to understand a number of complex processes which are specific to the subject. Historians must reconstruct historical events using a range of evidence, which can be incomplete, inconsistent and difficult to interpret (Masterman and Sharples, 2002: 165-185).

But with aid of ICT, the historian select and reproduce sources in a range of media, contextualize and interpret sources, reconstruct and simulate historical events, construct narratives, identify patterns in large quantities of data, develop, and organize and communicate historical thinking (BECTA ICT, 2018:1). As such historical research is becoming less time consuming, easier and less expensive owing to the fact historical research, studies and writing are now much easier that we can never imagine. For it reduces the financial implication or constraint, energy and time consuming in historical analyses and interpretation of information and facts, and judgment as well as inferences about it in order to make historical research more effective. Likewise to help to alleviate the constraints of writing and allows concentration on specific topic of research or discussion – which encourages reflection, analysis and understanding (Hannessy et al, 2003 & BECTA, 2018:1). Hence, the prospects of ICT on historical research are state below:

1. **Provision of multi-source materials:** ICT provide enable environment to access key relevant and related materials required by historians i.e. it provide him with a model for gathering e-books, journals, articles, archival materials, confidential document and even access to other materials/ library services in world universities and research institutions that a researcher might not even have the resources to visit for the rest of his life on earth. So these make historians to develop mode (style) on historical writing (NCET, 1998:1 – 3 & TTA, 1998) and interact with it content, enabling them to make control of provides proliferation and wide spread availability of historical information which removed the

restrictions and impediments of information hide in the past. In other words, ICT provide vast materials which make historians no longer depending solemnly on written document, archival materials, and oral interviews but also on film, television, radio, newspapers, magazine, tapes, official papers which all could be access online through libraries via the internet. As a matter of fact, ICT provides historians with almost all if not all theories and concepts needed in historical research within a short space of time and at a low cost. It has also enabled a quick contact and interview with important personalities or informants needed for this research work. ICT as a matter of fact has and will serve a great deal of importance in carrying out a historical research studies from one generation to another.

2. ***Provision of Storage materials and mechanism:*** ICT provide historians with easy storage mechanism for saving or downloading information, preserving of record or data in form of softcopy or hardcopy through the use of flash, disc, memory card, email, to mention but few. These prevent historical document from being stole by Mr. Thief, Mr. Fire disaster, water flood, climate and even virus. So ICT provide avenue in which historical information can be retrieved whenever the need arise since there are multiple means of preserving record for millions of years.
3. ***Energy and Time Saving, Chad and Discussion Forum:*** ICT makes historical research much easier, more convenience and well organized. This is because it create an avenue for historians to download materials and read them when they feel convince unlike higher institution of learning libraries which are filled with hardcopy books, journals and lot more but the libraries are limited by opening and closing time for instance 9:00am – 4:00pm for departments while central library to 9:00pm each day with. While some with exception of Sundays. But ICT services are available for 24 hours and much more, it provide room different search engines like google.com, devilfinder.com, and ask.com and equally provide the researcher the opportunity to create a group discussion forum using either E-mail, whatsapp, Facebook, or Twitter. In addition to online lectures and scholarly avenue for sharing knowledge, ideas, views, perspectives as well as update of knowledge and challenges confronting historical research, history as a discipline and various opportunity historians have the world. It also helps historians to organize their historical thinking, analysis and interrogate sources (BECTA, 2018:2) and to structure their writing by making it objective.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, with the above discussion, one can agreed that despite the challenges and prospect of ICT on historical research studies, the 21st century historians cannot survive in their historical research or reconstruction of human pass experiences and to arrive at objectivity without ICT which provides him access to wide range of information, historical sources and media types, which would otherwise not be readily available. Thus, having seen the importance of the ICT on historical research studies, it will be dangerous to be excited and not to bring to mind these challenges that come with it. Yes, there are challenges that comes with it but when properly addressed using historical methodology – historiography, the prospect of ICT is far enriching on historical research studies than the challenges is pose on the research and the discipline.

RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Historians should at all times corroborate the sources they access from the ICT with other historical sources order to avoid misconceptions, vague information, or its documentation.
2. Historians should not abundant other historical sources that they were known it despite the fact that the world is now a global village of ICT
3. Historians should always consult other library facilities than relying much on ICT
4. Historians should reduce the rate of their eyes exposure to the computer system light but rather they take all the precautionary measures as given by medical doctors.
5. Historians should ensure at all times that the focus of any history activity involving ICT is on developing history skills, and that the mechanics of ICT do not obstruct this development.
6. Student of history should critically evaluate electronic sources of information and make judgments about their reliability, authenticity and objectivity.

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