

RELEVANCE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) TO *DA'WAH* ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper titled the relevance of information and communication technology to *da'wah* activities in Nigeria examines the Islamic provision on the permissibility, of using modern information in the conveyance of Islamic messages to facilitate better understanding of the teachings of Islam. Therefore, the objective of the paper is to explore the Islamic provisions on the various measures proposed by Islam. The paper adopts historical research methodology in order to arrive at the solution to the problem. Literature were reviewed on concepts of *da'wah*, information and communication technology, gadgets used in communicating the messages of Islam (on the various activities of *da'wah* in Nigeria) significance of ICT in the spread of information,, it was concluded that it is the duty of the *du'at* to convey the Islamic positions on every aspect of an human life using all possible legal means, it was recommended that *du'at* in their activities, becomes necessary to use modern information and communication technologies in disseminating information on any topic of presentation for their numerous advantages and they should take the teachings of Islam into practice as far as information issues are concerned.

Keywords: *Da'wah Activities, Information, Communication, Technology, and Da'wah*

INTRODUCTION

We are in a new world of globalization. Whatever happens in one part of the globe is transmitted very quickly to other parts through the mass media and internet. This is made possible by new technologies such as telecommunications, computers and electronics. It is only a few years ago that we started hearing about internet, e-mail, satellite, GSM etc. Today, these gadgets are being used in various ways including *da'wah* activities. Older technologies such a typewriter, land-line, post office, library, etc. are being enhanced or replaced with newer technologies. We can therefore, no longer ignore the new information and communication technologies especially in *da'wah* Information and communication technology is a force that changed many aspects of the way we live. If one is to compare such fields as medicine, tourism, business, law, banking and architecture, the impact of ICT across the past two or three decades has been enormous. The ways these fields operate today is vastly different from the ways they operate in the past, but when one look at *da'wah* activities in the country, there seems to have been an uncanny lack of influence and far less change than other field have experienced. In today's world of *da'wah*, Islamic studies curriculum needs to replace the traditional pedagogical practices that still underpin its teaching and learning process. From the comparative stand point, the greatest challenge faced by *du'at* is

that they appear to be relatively deficient in computer skills and understanding of international *da'wah* activities trends. The program of *da'wah* needs ICT components not only as a tool for communication, but also as a tool for change in conveying the messages of Islam most especially in conveying the Islamic principles, knowledge and information.

This is made possible by new technologies such as telecommunications, computers and electronics. This is due to its popularity and its being a weapon with two edges. If the media, such as radio, newspapers and television, are used for giving *da'wah*, and for guiding people to Allah (SWT) and what the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has taught, then this is a great thing which can benefit the Muslim *Ummah* wherever they are, by the permission of Allah (SWT). This can also benefit the non- Muslims in helping them to understand Islam and comprehend it, learn about its merits and know that it is the path to success in this world and in the hereafter. It is obligatory for the *du'at*, as well as for the Muslim rulers to contribute in giving *Da'wah* in every way they can, through the use of radio, newspapers, television, and in khutbah (sermon) been delivered during *Juma'at* (Friday) prayers as well as on other days. They should also use other means which enables the people to hear the truth, in all the languages used by people, so that, *da'wah* and *nasihah* can reach them wherever they are in the world, in their own languages.

Concept of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

There is no generally acceptable definition of the term Information Communication Technology (ICT); ICT is a generic term referring to technologies that are used for collecting, storing, editing and passing information in various forms. According to Wali (2001:1), information communication technology or ICT comprises of various kinds and sizes of computers. The computers are connected via telephones to facilitate the sharing of the data they house. The data comes in many forms: texts, sounds and pictures. This definition places emphasis on computers as information technology, unlike Laudon (1994:67) whose definition is very elastic. It incorporates virtually every kind of device used in gathering and disseminating information. Where he opined that information technology and systems include all the different means, methods and tools that humans have used throughout history to manage information, conduct business, communicate with others and better understand the world.

Other Scholars who are more precise like Butcher (2003:10) citing Gunton (1993:150) defines ICT as electronic technologies for collecting, storing, processing, and communicating information.

Information Communication and Technology Tools that Can Be Used in *Da'wah* Activities to Convey the Islamic Messages to *Mad'uw* (Audience)

Information Communication and technology are generally accepted as a modern instrumental tool that enables the *du'at* to modify their *da'wah* methods; they are used in order to increase *Mad'uw*'s interest to facilitate understanding and learning. Ohomba (2006) opined that some of the tools used in the path of Information Communication and Technology among others include: (1) E- learning which usually refers to structured and managed learning experiences and may be provided partially or wholly via a web browser or through the internet or an internet or multimedia platform such as CD-ROMs or DVDs or other media and communication

(2) Video Lecture: The *du'at* prepared lecture that pertains to Islamic knowledge or messages such as methods of managing pandemic to be transmitted live on the internet which can be access from a website at any time. Charts and diagrams etc. can be accessed separately.

(3) E-Libra Here the *du'at* and the *Mad'uw* find thousands of books carrying a lot of messages to be conveyed to the Muslim *Ummah* via the internet.

(4) Internet: This is a global collection of many types of computer and computer networks that are linked together i.e., distance learning, which is also called as the e-learning form of studies in which students and teachers are at different location.

(5) Computers, CD ROM technology E-mail, BBS, Electronic display boards,

(6) Different types of printing machines, Desktop publishing (DTP), photocopier television Cinema, Radio, audio and video equipment

In the past there are olden means of communication that are universally acceptable for education, and propagation, though they are not invention of this age. They are conversations, speeches, lectures, workshops, seminars, symposiums, debates, dialogues, and discussions. All these and many more methods are being widely used all over the world today for the promotion of commercial, political, religious and many such other interests

The progress in this field is so rapid that many modes of communication popular today are likely to be discarded tomorrow. Revolutionary changes are taking place and every passing day takes man to a new height in this area.

From the definitions and different kinds of tools of ICT above one can make the following deductions: that information and communication technology carry out the functions of collecting; storing; processing; and communicating information and that information communication technology are technologies, equipment, and methods used to handle information. These include computers, telecommunications and electronics, and information and communication technology may cover both old and new technologies used for handling information from paper, pencil, books, camera to computers.

Essentially, a modern information system follows the same pattern as the communication cycle or process. It is an input – process output cycle. It involves taking in data by the *Da'i* such as sermons (input), analyzing this information i.e., sermon using computer to process i.e. (store, manipulate, rearrange, and analyses) the sermon and finally displaying this processed information to users usually on computer screens, television screens printers, or even through loudspeakers (output). The information supplied as output can then be used as a basis for acting on the data that was in put (feedback)

Using the Information Communication Technology for *Da'wah*

Muslims all over the world have not failed to notice the potential power of these new media, particularly the internet. A close surfing on the internet for instance shows a strong presence of Islamic websites in the WWW network. These websites are used for several *da'wah* purposes like teaching the fundamentals of the religion, explaining the obligations of Muslims, and discussing controversial issues of the faith. Some of the Muslim websites focus on issues like refutation of allegations against the religion, comparison between Islam and other monotheistic religions, and conducting debates between Muslims and non-Muslim scholars.

Several studies that probed the internet on Islamic websites have categorized and evaluated the content of these websites. A study by Azzi (1999) categorized Muslim Websites according to the owners of the sites; it categorized the initiators of these sites into individual Muslims, associations

of students, non-governmental organizations, Muslim minority group, media organizations and governmental sites. While Agboola (2001) investigated the content of the Websites and concluded that the majority of the Website it investigated belongs to individual students and or independent institutions and organizations. To Galander (2000) who opined that Muslim site were overwhelmingly efforts of Muslim students in the US, Britain, and elsewhere including Nigeria.

When the content of the Muslim websites was investigated, it was found out that most of the information in individually- initiated websites was informative about Islam. The sites of government and non- governmental organizations were, however, found to contain Public Relations (PR) and protocol information pertaining to these organizations (Algoobla 2001).

Thus, one may draw a conclusion that the effort of international *Da'wah* using this new medium is more ubiquitous than using conventional media newspapers Radio and TV. However, the content of the sites is largely limited and the types of organizations involved in the activity are mostly individual and non –official organization.

The Importance of Information and Communication Technology in *Da'wah* Activities

The importance of media in the Muslim *Ummah* is an avowed facet and its role in formation of human thought and civilization is known to all. Kamal (nd) is of the view that media reform the society by selecting concrete and positive criticisms touching all spheres of life- cultural, social, moral, political economics etc. and in this process, it adds by molding and directing human thought by its prime role of opinion making. In the present circumstances when Muslim *Ummah* is faced with monstrous issues of war and bloodshed, or backwardness and moral depravity, poverty and squalor, media can play its part by reforming and uniting the diversify and disjointed Muslim community. For performing such a duty, formation of a moral code for Muslim media men which should lead them to a path of the most pious, is a must. The Qur'an is a complete code of life and provides guidance to man in all fields of life it says:

O you who believe! Have Taqwa of Allah and speak (always) the truth. He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed achieved a great victory. (Q.33:70-71)

Da'wah activities like preaching and propagation of Islamic values- one of the fundamentals of an Islamic state system- lays stress upon all Muslims to work for this cause. In this respect, mass communication is one vital ingredient of *da'wah* the function of which is the training of the future generation as per Islamic injunction (Wali 2001)

The concept of *da'wah* itself, without the assistance of modern state of the art of technology, bears a potential threat for the religion. Once this idea is allied with modern information and communication technology of computers and satellites, it will initiate completely new era of Muslim ascendancy (Wali2001).

The WWW is basically the place of the websites where most of the information targeting an audience is placed. The communicators initiate these sites on the internet and present their messages in whatever form they choose: text, graphic, or voice, on the other hand, the internet also includes another facility: direct interaction with the audience. A person may choose to interact

with the audience instantaneously rather than send and then wait to receive the feedback (Merril 1991)

The internet on the one hand, provides Muslims with the opportunity to reach an unlimited audience, even though messages on the internet are read by a myriad of world receivers whose languages, perceptions and social values vary and who have an unlimited range of priorities and preferences. If the Muslims were to carry out *da'wah* activities successfully on this world-wide level of *da'wah* their efforts must accommodate these realities and hence, must deal with the complexities of the world audience, (Agboola 2001)

The Concept of *Da'wah* in Islam

As an Arabic word literally means 'to call', 'to summon', 'to invite.' And 'ask to come' (Wehr, 1980). Etymologically, the word "*da'wah*" covers meanings and activities ranging from addressing, calling, appealing, requesting, demanding, to worshiping, "concepts of summoning, calling on, appealing to, invocation, prayer (for and against something or someone), propaganda, missionary activity, and finally legal proceedings and claims" (Walker, 1995: 343).

The word "*da'wah*", is frequent in the Qur'an *da'wah* as calling does not always have a religious meaning: it could mean people addressing God, or request; invitation or propagation. For example, the glorious Qur'an says:

And oh, my people, how strange it is for me to call you to salvation while you call me to the fire! (Q40: 41).

The Qur'an warns against worshiping/ addressing any deity other than God. In the Qur'an, the word "*da'wah*" and its derivatives are used in different contexts over a hundred times for example:

And when My servants ask you about Me, I Am near; I answer the call of the caller when he calls on Me. So let them answer Me, and have faith in Me, that they may be rightly guided, (2:186),

Ibn Kathir (2007) understood the word *da'wah* used in the above verse as supplication or invocation to a certain need. He supported himself with the reason for the revelation of the verse thus: once upon a time a nomad said to the Prophet (SAW): Is Allah near to address Him secretly, or far away to call Him (when invoking Him)? The prophet (SAW) kept silent. Then Allah (SWT) sent down this verse which states the fact that if the believers responded to Allah (SWT) when commanded to invoke Him, thereto them Allah (SWT) will surely respond.

Another example could be seen in the glorious Qur'an where Allah (SWT) said:

And if you are in doubt about what We have Revealed to Our servant, and then produce a chapter Like these, and call your witnesses apart from God, if you are truthful. (Q 2:23)

Meaning, if you claim that what he Muhammad (SAW) was sent with (Qur'an) was not revealed to him from Allah (SWT), then, produce the like thereof even with the help of whoever you wish.

Since in the Qur'an the word "*Da'wah*" appears numerous times, only those verses that speak of or imply the preaching and spreading of Islam are dealt with in the present discussion. The following verses of the Qur'an contain the word *da'wah* with this connotation. Example:

If some servants of mine "asked you about Me, I am indeed close and I respond to the call of a suppliant (da'wah) if he calls upon Me. (Q.2:186)

Some *mufasssirun*, in their commentaries, provide other Arabic synonyms for "*da'wah*" with "*nada*" being the most common. In the contemporary setting of Muslim missionary activities, the term "*tabligh*" "conveyance", which does not appear in the Qur'an (an etymologically similar word, "*balagh*" arguably a synonym of "*tabligh*" is there, though), often substitutes for "*da'wah*" (Ibn Kathir, 1989). In his analysis of the concept of "*da'wah*", Walker nonetheless concludes that "*tabligh*" and "*da'wah*" are not synonymous but rather complementary (Walker 1995 – 345).

Unlike the term *tabligh*, meaning to "fulfill" or "implement" a mission - that is, to cause or bring about a given task, or to convey successfully a specific message - which is an active requirement, *da'wah* is a passive invitation, a summons, a call, or a prayer. It is perfectly possible, therefore, to speak of the "implementation" of the *da'wah* that is, *tabligh al-da'wah*. (Walker, 1995: 345.)

Ibn Kathir (1989) argues that "the Qur'anic usage of *balagh* signifies that the mere proclamation of the message is sufficient for the fulfillment of the mission; a preacher is not responsible for conversion", which he supports by the following Qur'anic verse:

... but if they turn away, then your duty is to convey. God is Seeing of the servants." (Q3:20)

The Arabic word for what in English is "missionary activity" is "*Tabshir*". In Islamic history it has been usually used to define non-Islamic (Christian) missions. The word "*tabshir*" does not appear in the Qur'an at all. Historically, Muslim missionaries have instead used *nashir al-da'wah*, "spreading the *da'wah*" to define their activity (Wali 2001).

The Glorious Qur'an 3:104 is one of those rare cases where the Qur'an speaks about a "group" of people who would be entrusted with a certain task, namely, implementing what is considered right and forbidding what is found to be wrong. Among the Muslim scholars of the classical times, al-Ghazali maintains that "enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong" is *fahd al-kifaya* and not *fahd al-'Ayn* (Imam Gazzali, 1978: 225). He distinguishes five forms of "enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong": giving simple advice; giving sermons with "sweet words"; "abusing and meting out harsh treatment;" applying force and preventing one from "doing a sinful act;" and finally, assaulting, beating, and threatening not to do a "sinful act." Only in this fifth form one is required to obtain permission from authorities for his actions (Imam Gazzali, 1978? 233). Al-Ghazali sees force as an integral part of the duty, something that inevitably clashes with the injunction of (Q2:256):

There shall be no compulsion in religion the right way has become distinct from the wrong way. Whoever renounces and believes in God has grasped the most trustworthy handle; which does not break. God is Hearing and Knowing

Later Muslim scholars do not dissociate the duty of "enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong" from the use of force.

Though most of the passages in the Qur'an that command *da'wah* directed at Muhammad (SAW) (the verb and pronoun forms used in the text are for masculine pronoun "you" in singular), verses like Qur'an 41:33 ("Who is better in speech than the one who invites to God and does good?") and the previously mentioned verse Qur'an 3:104 suggest that inviting to God is a very good deed to be done by Muslims generally.

The Use of Various Means of Communication to, Carry out *Da'wah* Activities

Allah (SWT) ordered the Prophet (SAW) and the Muslim Ummah to do *da'wah* as He said in the glorious Qur'an:

Let there be a group of people among you who invite to goodness, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, (Qur'an 3:104),

It is part of *Hikmah* to use other possible means of communication to invite both non-practicing Muslims and non-Muslims by appealing to their interests and needs. Example of these is writing, publishing, distributing books and other reading materials on Islam and using modern public media such as the radio television, and internet. Other examples include the production of computer programs on Islam. These means should be used so long as they do not run contrary to Islamic norms (Norlain 1998)

The Prophet (SAW) was reported by Anas bin Malik (RA) that he the Prophet (SAW) had an idea of writing a letter. The Prophet (SAW) was told that they (rulers) would not read letters unless they were sealed. So, the Prophet (SAW) got a silver ring made with "Muhammad, Allah's Messenger" engraved on it... (Sahih al- Bukhari, Vol.1 p. 65)

The *du'at*, who has the potentials to use and manipulate the information communication technology devises, should spend time developing programs for *da'wah* on Islam. This will benefit more people from different countries in many generations as much as possible

Electronic *Da'wah*

Pertaining to electronic media several technological innovations of the age have opened great opportunities for Muslims to fulfill their obligations towards the propagation of Islam. Ever since the advent of the earliest electronic communication technology of radio, several Muslim communities have made attempts to use the medium for the spread of the world of Islam by establishing radio stations dedicated to the course of Islam. Some famous among them are the al-Qur'an radio station in Cairo, Egypt;" the call of Islam Radio Riyadh in Saudi Arabia and special hours of broadcasting Islam in radio stations in Malaysia, Indonesia, Jordan, and many others in Muslim countries

The internet has changed, every aspect of modern life. But many Muslims still have not recognized the unique opportunity it offers for conveying the message of Islam. A great deal of time and money may be needed to purchase, produce, print, and mail literature, as well as to regularly call people or keep a staff available to answer questions. Although the internet will never replace face-face *da'wah* and distribution of Islamic literature, it will supplement it and continue to broaden *da'wah* opportunities in new ways. *Da'iyah* will continue to use the traditional means of

communication and education and to hold lectures and dialogue in public places. However, through the internet they can now also send multiple copies of a message by e-mail, print articles from the web for distribution, create Islamic websites, have interfaith dialogues in chat rooms and make use of online education. (Wali 2001).

E-mail has become an important means of communication. Islamic related information can be sent to both Muslims and non-Muslims at any time of the day or night from anywhere the world to practically anywhere else in the world. The recipient can receive message within seconds. E-mail messages are usually typed, but one can also use e-mail to send attachments containing documents, pictures, and lectures. An e-mail can be answered, stored, forwarded or printed out and other the facility to send a single message to many people at once, (Wali 2001).

E-da'wah means using the internet for *da'wah* purposes, and it has many benefits. According to Kassas (2005), the internet allows one to easily and inexpensively communicate with people around the world, he added that the web also makes learning more accessible. People are no longer totally dependent upon a teacher, *du'at* school, or library. The web offers worldwide resources as text, images, audio and video. Using the internet to carry out research cut cost and is usually faster; moreover, it offers year around, up-to-the minute information.

The net contains thousands of news groups hosted all over the world that cover every imaginable topic. It is used daily by millions of people around the world, and non-Muslims often post general questions about Islam. A *Da'iyah* may want to monitor newsgroups for negative comments in order to clear up misconceptions attempts by devious individuals or groups at distorting the teachings of Islam

People with a common Islamic interest can subscribe to an e-mail service called a news list. When a member sends an e-mail to the news list, all members receive the messages posted to it. Therefore, news list can be a very important and effective communication tool for *da'wah*. Various organizations use them to discuss, plan and announces events and to discusses recent news, various topics and common concerns. Subscribing to news list is on way to keep a *da'iyah* informed.

And finally, one can create a website. People from across the globe will be able to access it and download the information found there. Web pages may be printed from any computer connected to the internet, and links to the web can be e-mailed to anyone. Updating anything published on the web is simple and inexpensive. And people can find and visit the web pages that contain Islamic information, so any non-Muslim searching for truth will also benefit from the internet, (Azzi 1999).

CONCLUSION

All the information people have today regarding different materials, persons, events, parties, cultures, faiths, arts, philosophies, theories etc. have reached them through some instruments of communication, education and propagation, only that the views people hold are, to a great extent influenced, shaped and determine by such instruments. The relevance of these media in *da'wah* is immeasurable in conveying the message of Islam to the Muslim *Ummah* in *da'wah* processes. The *du'at* should develop skills and abilities to use this media for *da'wah* purposes. It is obligatory for the *da'i* as well as for the Muslim rulers to contribute in carrying out *da'wah* in every way they can, through the use of the modern information communication technology, during religious gathering especially during *jum'ah* (Friday) *khutbah* a well as on other religious occasions.

Recommendations

From the foregoing discussions it is recommended that *Du'at* who have potentials to use information and communication technology devices should:

1. Include them in their *da'wah* activities as that will benefit more people from different places and countries in many generations as much as possible.
2. The scholars must not refrain from clarifying the truth through the media; they must not leave this affair to the ignorant people.
3. The *du'at* should redirect the use of the media in an Islamic direction so that nothing remains in it that may harm the Muslims.
4. *Du'at* should also use other means which enable the people to hear the truth, in all the languages used by the people, so that *da'wah* and advice can reach them wherever they are in the world, in their own language.
5. The *du'at* should use the media to provide sufficient responses to whatever the media airs until righteous people are able to assume its responsibility and take over.
6. The *du'at* should use all possible, modern, permissible and trustworthy means of communication with the aim of spreading the knowledge of Islam

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