Introduction to Computer

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Computer is an electronic equipment designed to automati-cally accept and store data, manipulate them, and produce output results under the direction of a detailed step-by-step stored program of instructions. It has many characteristics which enabled a man to add to his mental power. We say that the mechanical machine has added muscle power to a man and the computer has aided the brain power to a man.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

The reader will be able to understand the following:

What is a Computer?
History of Computers
Basic components of the Computer System
Concept of Hardware and Software
Concept of Data Processing
Applications of Information, Electronic and Communica-tion Technology (IECT)

1.2 WHAT IS A COMPUTER?

computer is an electronic device that can perform a variety operations according to a set of instructions called program.

It then displays or prints the result. A computer is a general purpose machine that manipulates raw facts according to a set of instructions that are fed into it.

- Raw facts are known as *data*.
- Meaningful data constitute *Information*.
- Command that tells computer what to do are called *instructions*.
- The computer as a machine and all other equipment associated with it constitute *hardware* (See Figure 1.1).
- The instructions that tell it what to do is called *program*.
- A set of programs that perform a particular task is named *software*.

The word "computer" comes from the word *compute* which means to calculate. So a computer is normally considered to be a calculating device that can perform arithmetic operations at an enormous speed. But more accurately, a computer may be defined as a device that operates upon data.

☞ *A computer can, not only store and process data, but also retrieves data i.e. take out data from its memory or storage as and when desired. Thus, computer is a general term that refers to an electronic data processing machine used for a wide range of activities.*
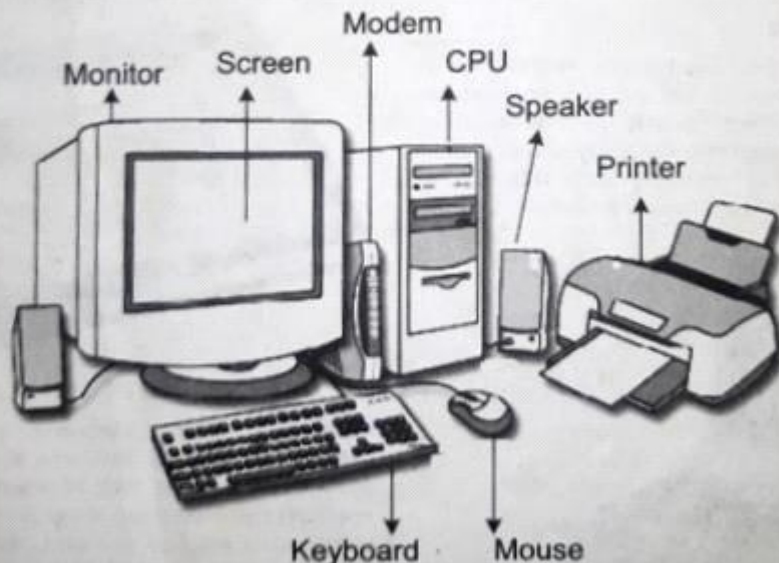

Figure 1.1 Parts of Computer system