

PROMOTING EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF SOCIAL STUDIES THROUGH INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper discussed how information communication technology can be used to promote effective teaching and learning of social studies. It looked briefly at some of the major concepts and issues related to social studies and information communication technology education. It advocates the integration of internet technology into teaching and learning of social studies at the primary and secondary levels of education. The paper suggested some basic guidelines for integrating the use of information communication technology into the social studies curriculum and enumerated benefits of using internet technology for teaching and learning in social studies. The paper also identified some of the likely problems and prospects of using internet technology for effective teaching and learning in social studies. The paper made some recommendations on how to solve these problems.

Introduction

The internet is a collection of computer networks that operate on common standards to enable the computers and programmes that it runs to communicate directly. The internet is beginning to play an important role in education. It provides an invaluable and rich source of information to students. Some of the benefits of using the internet for education as identified by Coulter, Feldman and Konold (2000) include:It

- Provides depth and content for learning in most subject areas.
- Allows the user to engage in enquiry by exploring nearly unlimited resources available on the internet.
- Textbooks are often outdated, but most website resources are often current and updated frequently.
- Instruction is less teacher-centred as students' curiosity drives their learning.
- Allows students to learn at their own pace and time as the internet can be assessed anytime of the day.

It is important for students in Nigeria to take advantage of these and to prepare for a globally competitive society. Teachers must provide opportunities for them to use internet technology while working together to access information, applying information in problem solving and sharing their solutions (Leu, 2000). Students must become critical consumers of information and learn to assemble that information in order to create a coherent product.

The aim of this paper is to discuss how the integration of Information Communication technology into the social studies curriculum can enhance effective teaching and learning in this subject area. It is in pursuance of the benefits and the importance of information communication technology that the Federal Government of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education directed as follows:

In recognition of the prominent role of information communication technology in advancing knowledge and skills necessary for functioning in the modern world there is an urgent need to integrate information communication technology (ICT) into education in Nigeria.

The National Policy also states that:

Government shall provide necessary infrastructure and training for integration of information communication

technology in the school system in recognition of the role of information communication technology in advancing knowledge and skills in the modern world (FRN, 2004).

One of the subjects in the school system is social studies. It has been described as an interdisciplinary approach to the study of human beings in group interrelationship with their social and physical environment (Okam, 1998). More emphatically, social studies underscores the preparation and mobilization of learners for the purpose of enabling them cultivate an awareness and understanding that would transform them into citizens with skills, competencies, moral values and reasoned judgements to effectively live, interact, interrelate and contribute positively to the economic, social, political and cultural development of their societies. Internet Technology, because of its wide content, has a great potential for promoting awareness and understanding in learners.

The National Policy on Education gave a prominent place to social studies within the school curricula as a core subject area, which all pupils in primary and secondary schools cannot dispense with in their learning activities. This is, perhaps, in recognition of the potentialities of social studies for inculcating the right kind of skills and virtues through a unified and integrated disciplinary study of man. Social studies is an eclectic distillation of many disciplines including history, political science, geography, anthropology, psychology, economics, religious studies, agricultural science, sociology, civics, philosophy, medicine, technology etc. The epistemology of social studies is largely conceptualized on the theory of integration of related subjects that stress, in effect, the need to make connections within these disciplines towards understanding of man and his interaction with his total environment. This calls for optimum use of internet technology, which has a rich content and wide coverage.

The multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary underpinning of the content of social studies calls for application of new dimensions and new orientations in planning and synthesizing of a variety of teaching and learning techniques such as inquiry, project, lecture, role playing, problem solving, guided discussion, simulation technology and other methods for the purpose of ensuring an attainment of appropriate social studies objectives. The social studies educator must accept responsibility for involving learners in a variety of classroom activities. These activities should provide opportunity for the learner to practice appropriate behaviour. For example, to learn to think critically and form sound judgement, the learner must practice forming judgment. Thus, the use of internet technology which is multimedia and pupil-centred in nature, as a teaching technique in social studies will go a long way to enhance teaching and learning in this area.

Reading is one of the most important skills for learning in schools. The art of reading should be employed to foster the effective communication of knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes and appreciations in social studies (Okam, 1998). Basic to the achievement or acquisition of all social studies skills is the learner's ability to read a variety of social studies materials. However, the general high cost of books in Nigeria today as a result of which many students cannot afford to buy books and the lack of a general reading culture among youths makes it difficult to get students to read wide. The use of internet technology, which has a rich and wide content, will provide access to an inexhaustible source of reading material which will greatly enhance the teaching and learning of social studies in Nigeria.

In spite of efforts made in the past by educationists and government agencies in establishing the teaching and learning of social studies in schools and colleges in Nigeria since the 1950s, findings reported by writers such as Funtua (1980) Ogundare (1985), Agboola (1985) and Okam (1988) have identified the following as the problem confronting social studies education in Nigeria:

- **The Problem of the Subject itself:** Social studies as a subject is a new discipline and little is yet to be known about it. The nature and scope of the subject and its methodology remain hazy among students, teachers and even school administrators.

Some people see social studies as; history and geography, some see it as civic, others see it as current affairs while many others see it as consisting of many subject areas. Social studies readily accept changes. It is not static like other subjects seem to be. It deals with human beings and since human beings are hard to predict as a result of changes in their behaviour, the direction of social studies cannot be predicted.

- **The Problem of Materials:** The materials for this subject are still limited. It requires a lot of teacher's time to make materials suitable for the teaching and learning of social studies in schools. Hence, it is usually expensive for the teacher to produce or purchase materials for the subject.
- **The problem of Teacher:** There are very few teachers who are specially trained to teach the subject as of now. For this reason, teachers are borrowed from various subject areas to teach social studies. It is known that any teacher can be called upon to teach social studies when its teachers are lacking. Thus in social studies department of various schools, you could find teachers of geography, history and even Fine Arts. This system does not augur well for the subject. Even in some of these disciplines of History and Geography they fail to realize that the methodology of social studies is not necessarily the same thing as the methodology of other subjects. It is also surprising that many teachers have sprung up from nowhere to claim authority in this new field without adequate investigation and information on the nature of the subject and its mission. It is difficult to see how one who is ignorant of a subject can deliver it effectively. The position of these unsuitable teachers has made it more difficult to debunk the erroneous impression that social studies is merely history, geography and civics.
- **The Problem of Evaluation:** The amount of knowledge gained in social studies cannot be easily evaluated by the 'paper-pencil method'. Social studies is expected among other things to have positive effects on human behaviour and human relations. This affective aspect of social studies is difficult to evaluate through our system of evaluation which concentrates more on the cognitive domain.
- **The Problem of Textbooks:** One of the problems facing social studies is the lack of adequate textbooks. There are only very few textbooks which satisfy the needs of students and teachers. Students as well as teachers find it difficult to go on smoothly with the subject for lack of adequate textbooks for the subject discipline.
- **The problem of Resistance:** Man by nature is resistant to change. Hence the introduction of social studies has attracted series of criticisms and protests in some parts of the country. Despite persistent calls by the Federal Ministry of Education and the Nigeria Educational Research and Development council on all states of the Federation to introduce social studies in their school curriculum, some have remained basically adamant to these innovations.

This paper holds the view that the introduction of internet technology into teaching and learning of social studies will help solve these problems. Details of how this can happen is discussed in the section of this paper on benefits of using internet technology for teaching and learning in social studies. Writers such as Ehaman and Clenn (1991) and Tancook (2002) also supported the view that the integration of Information Communication technology in the social studies curriculum will enhance teaching and learning in this subject.

Benefits of Using Information Communication Technology for Effective Teaching and Learning in Social Studies

The following are some of the benefits students can derive from using information Communication technology for teaching and learning in social studies:

- It was mentioned earlier in this paper, that reading a variety of materials is very important in social studies. The internet contains a rich source of information that the social studies students will find very useful. According to Tancook (2002), the

Internet allow these students to see places they have never heard, students who look part in WebQuests acquired improved computer skills in word-processing and use of the internet. The use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) promotes more meaningful communication and so enhances teaching and learning. The global trend is wheeling round, focusing and emphasizing the use of information communicating technology (ICT) in all works of life. Access to information is an essential tool for a meaningful development of any nation. It is therefore, important that the social studies teachers are equipped with the knowledge and usage of information communication technology.

Akinbode (1981) described the social studies teacher as resembling the heart of the intellectual and social life of the society and it is through him that each generation comes to terms with its heritage, produces new knowledge and learns to deal with change. On the teachers' part knowledge of what is to be taught may help to bring out in the learner specific learning outcomes, lack of a working knowledge of what to teach might constitute a critical limiting factor to the effectiveness of the utilization of information communication technology in the teaching of social studies (Akinbode, 1981)

Historically, information communication technology is integral part of human society. In many cultures today, information presentation and retrieval (the recording of wisdom and history) are still done with the use of speech, drama, painting, songs and dance. The use of writing changed this enormously, and the invention of the printing press allowed communication on a massive scale, through newspapers and other mass media.

Most recently are technology innovations which have further enriched the speed of communication, culminating into digital technology like the radio, television, projectors, tape recorder, video, computer services such as internet and intranet services computer programme instruction etc.

Iyamu and Aduwa (2005) assert that at every level of education, educational technology is perceived as a vehicle for curriculum enhancement. Citing, Hadley and Sheigold (1992) Madaniel, Meinerney and Armstrong (1993) Hannafin and Savenge, (1993) in assessment of the use of Educational Technology by Social Studies teachers in secondary school in Western Nigeria, Iyamu and Aduwa, (2005) indicated that educational technology has the potential for enhancing student learning. Educational technology in this context refers to technology that is employed in the classroom for the purpose of student instruction. This they said is all about computer based technology including computer hardware, software, CD Rom, video disc player and the internet. These forms of technology provide teachers and students with vast quantities of information in an easily accessible non sequential format that can be used as teaching tool.

Nigeria has become aware of the invaluable role of information communication technology in effective teaching and learning such that they have initiated connectivity and technology training programmes. Such programmes are expected to link schools and libraries around the world to improve education, enhance cultural understanding, and develop vital skills of creativity, problem-solving in the global setting. Aduwa and Iyamu (2005) reported on the progress made to provide education institution with computers and to encourage information communication technology as an integral component of the educational process so as to meet the demand and challenges of globalization.

Problems of using Information Communication Technology for Effective Teaching and Learning of Social Studies

The following are some of the likely problems of using internet technology for teaching and learning in social studies:

Teachers; Technological Anxiety/Lack of Confidence: Many teachers who do not consider themselves to be well skilled in using information communication technology feel anxious about using it in front of a class of children who perhaps know more than them. Lerner and Timber Lake (1995) found that teachers were worried about showing their pupils that they did not know how to use the equipment and that it was the teachers who experienced this kind of anxiety who were less willing and/unable to make use of computer in their teaching. In addition, pupils' attitudes and expectations of their teachers' competence in information communication technology are likely to contribute to this teacher anxiety.

Lack of Access of Resources: Mumtaz (2000) points out that information communication technology (ICT) is invariably found in those schools that have high quality information communication technology resources and that lack of soft wares can seriously limit what teachers can do in the classroom with regard to the implementation of information communication technology in teaching social studies.

Lack of Time: A problem that exists for teachers in many aspects of their work is that of lack of time available for them to complete given tasks and preparing information communication technologies to teach social studies. Fabry and Higgs (1997) pointed out that learning new skills in any profession requires day teaching with other commitments, such as liaising with parents and attending staff meetings. Yet they do need that time to experiment with the technology, share their experience with colleagues and attend technology related in-service training programmes.

Technical Problem: Gbenga (2004) stressed that problems of teachers in information communication technology use can be caused by fear of things going wrong than lack of technical support. On fear of things going wrong, he believes teachers fear for equipments breaking down in a lesson or that if they use the equipment they will do something wrong and cause damage to it or themselves. Another problem arising from subsequent disruption after the breaking down of equipment is resistance to change and negative attitude.

Resistance to Change and Negative Attitude

To the uninformed, the problems of utilization of information communication technology in schools suggest that in the teaching profession generally, there is an inherent resistance to some change and this is another problem to some teachers' use of new technologies in education.

Teachers are often suspicious of new claims and the implementation of new ideas without proof of effectiveness (and) teachers tend to adopt a new technology when that technology helps them to do what they are currently doing better.

Gidado (1999) has attempted to give theoretical explanation to the problem of inadequate or lack of facilities in our educational institution under what they termed 'macro-theoretical frame work'. Under this term educational enterprises operate under politics and economics of the wider society. According to Bowels and Gintis (1996) what happens in the educational system is determined by the nation's economy. By implication, education does not have an independent existence, even though it influences the society, its nature and functioning is most influenced by the nation's politics and economy.

Prospect of Effective Utilization of Information Communication Technology in Teaching Social Studies

It improves learning for the teacher and students: Information Communication Technology improves learning because teachers will be able to recognize and pay better attention to individual differences in the learners. For instance, computer assisted instruction offers itself of individualized learning. Students can receive accurate information, access information and obtain immediate feedback (Abimbade, 1999). Gbenga (2004) asserted that information communication technology can be used to provide immediate up-to-date resources using one or more media to a large number of educators

learners easily and relatively cheaper without incurring major additional distribution costs. Thus, whatever the situation of information communication technology, it is imperative that the future of our education lies in the ability to provide these facilities for effective teaching and learning if only we are ready to join the global technology age and challenges.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed how information communication technology can promote effective teaching and learning of social studies. Computer and internet technologies are changing. Because of technology, the way in which readers interact with print has changed, and the construction of meaning in both reading and writing. Students today must know how to use technology when writing and creating projects that show relationship among pieces of information to children. Social studies curricula are about building knowledge of the world. This paper has shown how internet technology can be used for promoting effective teaching and learning in social studies.

We have also noted how Information Communication Technology can be used for the purpose of ensuring an attainment of appropriate social studies objectives. We noted that the use of internet technology must be extended to the rural and riverine areas because the internet which is multimedia and pupil-centred in nature, can be used as a teaching technique in social studies which will go a long way to enhance the teaching and learning of social studies in the rural and riverine areas. The use of internet technology will provide an inexhaustible source of information which will greatly enhance the teaching and learning of social studies in Nigeria, and also enhance effective communication of knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes and the methodology in social studies generally.

Recommendations

1. Government at all levels should ensure that the basic infrastructural facilities required for integrating internet technology in the social studies curriculum are made available in all primary and secondary schools in Nigeria
2. Facilities should be put in place in schools where there are no computer and internet access. Cyber Cafes near such schools should be used for this purpose.
3. Governments at all levels and proprietors of schools should ensure that the basic infrastructural facilities required for integrating internet technology in the Social Studies Curriculum such as computers and internet access are made available in all primary and secondary schools throughout the Federation. However, in the interim before these facilities are put in place, schools which do not have computers and internet access should make use of Cyber Cafes around them.
4. Because of the importance of information communication technology to national development, governments at all levels and proprietors of schools should provide information communication technology training for all practicing teachers. Teachers should also be taught how they can use internet technology for enhancing teaching and learning.
5. For the implementation of the National Policy on Education, schools are to immediately commence the process of integrating information communication technology into all subjects being taught in the school curriculum and at all levels of education in Nigeria, this paper holds the view that this will go a long way towards enhancing teaching and learning in these subjects.
6. The National Social Studies Curriculum when reviewed should include the use of the internet among the prescribed teacher/student activities. Internet resources should also be identified as a source of instructional materials.
7. All teacher education institutions in Nigeria should be provided with basic equipments, infrastructure and specialized manpower required for providing information communication technology training to their students. Teachers in

training should be taught on how to integrate internet technology into teaching and learning in all subjects.

8. Government should put in place measures to ensure constant supply of electricity in the country, or generator should be provided to power the information technology equipments in place
9. Internet connectivity in Nigeria will only be a reality when the three tiers of government help to pursue it. An awareness campaign must be conducted by the three tiers of government in all institutions of higher learning. Adebayo (2002) opined that it involves seminars, installation of effective telecommunication systems, encouragement of computer literacy from primary schools, provision of internet service providers (ISP) and a regulatory policy. This will help make the infrastructure possible in all our schools systems.
10. In order to achieve high level of teacher competence in information communication technology, there is a need to provide training. There is a great deal of literature evidence to suggest that effective training is crucial if teachers are to implement information technology effectively in their teaching.

This is because the campaign is capital intensive. Adebayo further opined that it involves seminars, installation of effective telecommunication systems, encouragement of computer literacy from primary schools, provision of internet service providers (ISP) and a regulatory policy. This will help make the infrastructure possible in all our schools systems.

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