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**APPLICATION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY (ICT) RESOURCES FOR THE TEACHING AND
LEARNING OF SOCIAL STUDIES FOR NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD**

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Abstract

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) when fully injected into teachers' methodology in teaching will result in the upgrade of education through simple but advanced approach. Hence, this paper examined how ICT could be effectively utilized in the teaching and learning of social studies as a strategic instrument for national development. The major factors limiting the utilization of ICT for innovative and transformative teaching and learning of social studies were identified and discussed – poor funding, poor and epileptic power supply, inadequate teacher professional development programmes (in-service training) and so on. Ways of improving the expertise of social studies teachers through ICT were also discussed. Tenable recommendations were proffered: Social studies teachers should be trained and retrained in ICT resources usage, the government should endeavour to improve power supply in the country and so on.

Keywords: Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Innovative Teaching and Learning, ICT Resources, Social Studies Education, National Development.

National development remains a challenge that preoccupies all nations of the world that aspire for greatness. This great challenge must not be trivialized. Hence, the authors with a sense of passion craved for the use of ICT in the teaching and learning of social studies, as enabling and stimulating instrument for the attainment of national development. The quest for national development should begin with having responsible citizens who are ready to contribute to the growth of the society. According to Ikem and Reuben (2012) social studies education, by its interdisciplinary nature, builds in individuals the basic knowledge and ways of thinking, that prepare them to participate in civic and community life as active and informed citizens. Critical issues of national development are multidisciplinary in nature and so, understanding them and developing resolutions to them requires multidisciplinary education.

Nigeria is currently facing several socio-economic and political problems which ranges from rural-urban migration, environmental pollution, deforestation, corruption, injustice, poor power supply, acute poverty, insecurity (like the Boko Haram insurgency), cyber crimes among others. The country is also facing the challenge of how to overcome these debilitating problems and promote the development of the economy and the people, because no meaningful development can take place where these problems persist (Kolawole, 2011).

Development of ICT has changed the world of today – the education sector is not an exception. The advent of ICT has introduced us into the “Information Age” where virtually everything is improvable by technology. The world has yielded to the unchanging law of dynamism and turned to the revolutionary technology, which has virtually transformed the initial orthodox methods of carrying out certain activities (including teaching-learning process) into an upgraded fashion. There is a strong relationship between social studies education and national development. Social studies education is identified as a potent force in the pursuit of development challenges in Nigeria. However, for social studies education to achieve this national dream, there is need for improvement in teaching and learning through the effective application of ICT resources. The focus of this paper, therefore, is to explore how ICT could be fully utilized to bring innovation in the teaching and learning of social studies education in Nigeria and to foster national development.

The Concept of Social Studies

Social studies is the study of man and his environment – physical, social, economic, cultural, religious and political. Social studies is concerned mainly with the reciprocal relationship between man and environment. This implies that it deals with how man is influenced by his environment, and how man also tries to influence his environment. It is a problem-solving and inter-disciplinary subject that provide us with

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ways of looking at the society in order to understand its structure and problems and to find ways of solving the problems of the society.

The Concept of National Development

The acquisition of basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes are basic ingredients needed by citizens to contribute manfully to the growth of a society leading to national development. According to Oluwagbohunmi (2012) national development is the anticipated desirable positive changes that occur in educational, economic, political, socio-cultural and technological aspects of life which usher in an improved standard of living for the benefit of the entire citizenry.

The Concept of ICT

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is "an equipment or interconnected system of equipment that is used in the automatic acquisition, storage, manipulating, management, control, display, switching and transmission of information (National Policy for Information, FRN, 2014). ICT can also be described as a generic term referring to technologies which are being used for collecting, storing, editing and passing of information in various forms. It covers the range of computers, telecommunication and networking technologies involved in the transfer and processing of information.

ICTs can be grouped into three categories such as information technology using computers, telecommunication technology (telephone, radio and television) and networking technologies (internet). According to Adigwai (2011), Etonyeaku (2013) cited in Edeh and Bolarinwa (2014) ICT tools/facilities/resources include personal computers, digital television, satellite equipment, camera, Internet, CD ROMs, overhead projectors, slide projectors, electronic chalkboards (instruction boards), printers, scanners, photocopies, telephones, radios, fax machines, floppy diskettes, flash drives, audio/video tape players, television, mobile/smart phones and so on.

The Major Threats to National Development in Nigeria

Numerous factors have been identified as challenges facing national development in Nigeria. However, Ahmed (2013) and Oluwagbohunwi (2012) identified the following:

- Problems of leadership and fellowship
- Ethnicity and regionalism
- Poverty, hunger and unemployment
- Lack of respect for rule of law
- Religious crisis and terrorism (Boko Haram)
- Dependent economy
- Negative social values and attitudes
- Stealing, fraud and armed robbery
- Poor work ethics

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- Electoral malpractices, political victimization and political killings
- Inadequate provision of social amenities.
- Injustice, oppression and cruelty
- Misappropriation and embezzlement of public funds.
- Problems of crime and insecurity

Comparatively, the most recent and disturbing threat to national development today is insecurity. Every Nigerian today lives in fear, not fear for the unknown but the fear of the known. The fear that sooner than later a bomb will go off somewhere, likely in a church, supermarket or car park. That is the unfortunate state of the nation.

Social Studies Education and National Development

Social studies education can play a vital role in developing national thinking, hard work and dignity of labour, promoting political literacy and encouraging democratic values and principles that will foster national development. Hence, Oluwagbohunmi (2012) stated that the relevance of social studies to national development hinges on its usefulness in preparing students for:

- the understanding of everyday problems that could be encountered as citizens and how to find solutions to them,
- meaningful and useful living,
- development of positive habits for good human relationship,
- self and national economy,
- efficiency and survival,
- effective citizenship through active participation in democratic practices,
- willingness to perform civic responsibilities without being forced,
- national consciousness and national unity,
- social and political progress,
- obedience to the laws of the land,
- national decision making and sound judgment and
- scientific and technological awareness.

We are optimistic that social studies education has the potent instrument that can facilitate the attainment of national development goals through the production of responsible citizens that will contribute maximally to the growth of the society. This can be seen from the citizen's behavioural dispositions which may include honesty, dedication, uprightness, hard work and productivity (Ikem & Reuben, 2012). The fact that citizens of a country acquire the requisite knowledge and develop skills through education generally, cannot be over stressed; but the development of desirable attitudes necessary to live comfortably and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society are imported and imbibed through social studies. Fadeyiye (2005) opined that social studies enables individuals to be alive to their social and civic responsibilities and that in a situation where Nigeria is plagued with social problems and indiscipline

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among adults and youths – social studies is essential to build a strong and united nation by combating such vices as corruption and religious intolerance.

The attainment of national development is strongly linked with the concept of responsible citizenship (an integral part of social studies). The young people, as a matter of deliberate effort, should contribute to the society they live in. When the young people are properly brought up, they will develop what Fairbrother (2003) called, “critical patriotism”. This will enhance the training capacity for them to love their country, develop an understanding of their culture which is dynamic and ever changing as the promotion of a nation’s cultural heritage. According to Osakwe (2009) social studies examined issues and problems from a holistic viewpoint. He further stated that social studies education is an avenue for providing young people with a feeling of hope in the future and confidence in their ability to solve the social, political and environmental problems of individuals, their community, state or nation. Social studies provides a better ground for moral training especially for countries undergoing development like Nigeria. It describe vices, unmasks false virtues, it exposes errors and prejudice; it shows by thousand of examples that there is nothing great and laudable except honesty and uprightness. The social content area of social studies curriculum debunks social maladies such as corruption, intolerance, religious crisis, injustice oppression and so on. In order to achieve these aims, social studies should be handled by professionally trained teachers who are accustomed to the rationale for including it in the curriculum. Social studies teachers should also be willing to teach it effectively (especially with the use of electronic media like the ICT resources) to achieve its objectives of building the individual and by extension building the nation.

Challenges Faced by Social Studies Teachers in ICT Growing Environment

- **Poor Funding:** The expensive nature of ICT equipment and resources, such as computers, projectors, satellite equipment among others, is a major challenge to its utilization. Adequate funding is of utmost importance in the adoption and use of any ICT resource. To procure ICT resources, funds are required. In Nigeria, education is not well funded. In this sense, funds are needed for every activity of ICT resources such as procurement, management, maintenance and so on. For instance, the N424.3 billion (10.7%) allocated to the education sector by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) in last year’s (2014) budget is far short of 26% minimum recommendation by UNESCO.
- **Inadequate Teacher Professional Development Programmes:** The successes recorded by multi-national firms such as Shell, Chevron, the banking sector among others in their various endeavours can be ascribed to regular training and retraining of their human resources to meet the challenges of a dynamic and highly competitive economic system. Educational institutions in Nigeria do not organize adequate in-service training programmes like seminars, workshops and refresher courses that will help to equip teachers with the necessary skill needed in the area of ICT resources usage and management.

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- **Epileptic Power Supply:** The epileptic state of the nation's power supply poses a major threat to the effective utilization of ICT resources. ICT resources are made to function with other amenities such as electricity. When electricity supply is not stable and consistent; it is difficult to keep high-tech equipment like computer. The cost of running an alternative power supply (generating set) is very expensive in Nigeria.
- **Attitude of Social Studies Teachers toward Innovation:** The attitude of social studies teachers towards innovative teaching and learning using ICT resources is also a problem. Not all social studies teachers are willing to accept new technologies for themselves.
- **Inadequate Pre-service Training for Teacher Trainees:** Majority of social studies teachers lack ICT skills due to poor background- this makes them to be incompetent in its usage and management. Teacher Trainees should be given opportunities in the acquisition of ICT knowledge. This can begin by promoting computer- training programmes for them. Monetary incentive could be offered as means of motivation.

Improving the Expertise of Social Studies Teachers through ICT

Teacher efficiency could be developed through ICT IN the following ways:

- **Training and retraining of teachers on ICT usage:** In the past years much energy has been expended mainly on curriculum reform and little attention focused on the pre-service and in-service professional development of teachers to meet the challenges of a fast changing technological society. Hence, the authors opine that conferences, seminars and workshops should be organized to train social studies teachers on the use of new educational technology tools for effective teaching and learning as well as the opportunity to access the latest trends and techniques in their profession through ICT.
- **Equipment of schools with ICT tools:** ICT increasingly pervades various aspects of our daily lives like work, business, teaching, learning, leisure and health. Since ICT leads all processes based on information, every individual in the Nigerian society should become technology competent. Thus, all schools have to be equipped with the necessary ICT tools in order to provide the next generations with the needed tools and resources for access and use, and to attain the expected skills. Norris, Sullivan, and Poirot (2003) points out the importance of accessibility as, "teacher's use of technology for curricular purposes is almost exclusively a function of their access to that technology"
- **Use of ICT tools in teaching:** Through ICT, materials could be easily sourced from the internet. This would not only strengthen the elementary education needs of the country but would also increase the dependence of education on ICT. Retaining the already existing technologies for a considerable period of time and subsequently embracing new technologies should have fine balancing, so as to improve also the quality of education.
- **Integration of ICT in educational systems:** ICT should be integrated into all levels of an educational system from classrooms to ministries for use in management,

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teaching and learning activities. Thus, teachers must receive adequate ongoing training on new technology use to match the curriculum's and theory of learning and adequate numbers of computers must be conveniently located within the classroom (Al-Bataineh & Brooks, 2003) cited in (Binitie, Anujeonye & Okwuigala, 2014).

Conclusion

ICT is acknowledged as a potent tool for creating adequate, effective and needed development in virtually all the sectors of the economy. ICT resources offer greater opportunity for innovation and transformation in the teaching and learning of social studies. This paper sees the use of social studies education as a realistic platform for the production of responsible citizens who will contribute positively towards the country's quest for national development. If the citizens are therefore identified as instruments to pursue development, then, the need to strengthen and improve the teaching and learning of social studies in Nigeria is indisputable. If the private sectors like the banking industries are competing with their western counterparts in rendering services through ICT, Nigerian social studies educators can fare better if they receive adequate attention for ICT integration. Based on the fact that some teachers teaching in this 21st century (information age) are not ICT compliant, training them in the use of ICT facilities would result in effective teaching.

Recommendations

In view of the relevance of ICT in the teaching of social studies education, the following recommendations are made.

- The ministries of education at all levels should organize seminars, workshops and refresher course to educate the teachers on the use of ICT resources. These forms of in-service training should be a continuous exercise for teacher professional development.
- Social studies teachers should encourage the students to develop the spirit of national consciousness, patriotism and loyalty to the nation. These are veritable instruments for national development.
- Government as a matter of priority should implement the UNESCO recommendation of a minimum of 26% budgetary allocation to education.
- Government should also ensure that ICT policy statement is translated into reality.
- ICT tools and equipment manufacturers should be encouraged to set up manufacturing plants in Nigeria to increase supply.
- Government should endeavour to provide steady electric power supply.
- All teacher education institutions should integrate ICT as a course in education curriculum.
- Social studies education teachers and students must be ICT minded in this age; they must adopt positive attitude towards ICT application and use them maximally.

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