

# ENHANCING SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING AND LEARNING BY THE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)



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## **Abstract**

*The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a form of curriculum diversification. Curriculum diversification is the global trend in curricular practices. In the context of this paper, diversification involves a form of interaction and source of information in teaching and learning. Considering the importance of ICT in teaching and learning, its use becomes imperative for today's education arising from the fast pace of scientific and technological development and change. Social studies is an embodiment of knowledge, skill, attitude and values to equip man so as to be able to solve his numerous socio-economic and political problems. This paper provides an overview of how the use of ICT can enhance the teaching and learning of social studies. The main body of the paper identifies major steps to successful use of ICT in teaching and learning social studies. Some recommendations were made on how best to ensure the enhancing role of ICT in teaching and learning social studies.*

## **Conceptual Framework**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) comprises of two words; which are, information technology and communication technology. Ndudim (2007) defined information technology as any form of technology that involves equipment or technique used by people to handle information. Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) (2007) saw it as “the study-design, development, application support or management of computer based on information system particularly software application and computer hardware”.

Communication technology according to Wikipedia (2007:297) “Is concerned with importing or exchanging information in many forms and over all distances ranging from minute distance within electronic circuitry to the thousands of kilometers between continents”.

ICT could be defined as the handling and processing of information (in form of texts, images, graphs and instrument) for use by means of electronic and communication devices such as computer, cameras and telephone. In line with the

above definition, Gushen in Oginni (2009) saw ICT as technology that concerns with processing, storing, retrieving and communicating data to users.

Uzoegwu (2009) in her contribution saw ICT as encompassing those technologies that aid communication process of passing messages from the sender to the receiver. She went further to explain that advancement in those technologies has brought about the development of communication and multimedia equipment which are capable of accepting and processing data into information and storing both data and information for future use and reference purposes.

### **Rationale for Using ICT in Teaching and Learning Social Studies**

The use of ICT is a form of curriculum diversification. Curriculum diversification is the global trend in curricular practices characterized by the shift from the traditional form to modern practices. In the context of this paper, curriculum diversification is the form of interaction between the teacher and the taught as well as source of information shifting from the teacher being the sole source to other sources stocked with both current and wider coverage.

Fullan (1982), a renowned expert in change theory posits that educational change depends on what teachers do and think. It is important to note that before technology can effect change in the classroom, those ultimately responsible for classroom must be considered. Therefore teachers must learn to use technology and allow its usage to change their teaching paradigm.

ICT is used to reduce the teachers' workload by making planning and resources available through internet. The ultimate goal of promoting the use of ICT in classroom has been to increase the effectiveness of teaching and enhancing students learning. Further rationale for the use of ICT lies in the augmenting role of electronics as source of information. This is in line with Berenfield (1999) view that in the developed countries of the world; ICT has changed how people live, work and play. He went further to say that most developed countries of the world have explored the potentials of ICT to transform their educational landscape on source of information

Uzoegwu (2009) posited that ICT can make a difference to pupils' learning and substantial gain recorded in pupils' attainment when the use of ICT is planned structurally and integrated effectively. Supporting this view, Okubanjo (2005) had earlier suggested that reading competence is crucial for continuous success in school and students life, hence, it remains a central and basic skill for effective learning of any school subject (including social studies).

With the advent of the internet and its usage in some schools, the usage of ICT skills, knowledge and understanding in all subjects is becoming a reality. Moreover, ICT is becoming more and more prevalent in our everyday lives.

## ***Enhancing Social Studies Teaching and Learning by the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) - Nnamani Simon Chijioke***

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Further rationale for the use of ICT in teaching and learning social studies is based on the theory of change and liberalization of education. The advocate of this theory as posited by Mkpa (2009) drew attention to the need to change and to broaden the base of knowledge for recipients of education. This can be traced to the main catalyst, liberalization of education and diversification of curriculum. The comparative studies of school system contributed in no small measure in the crusade for curriculum diversification. The great leap in scientific, technological, political and social advancement in Europe and America in the 20<sup>th</sup> century characterized by more intercontinental and international interaction and unrestricted spread of technology and knowledge.

This change and education liberalization is all aimed at human capital formation. Bowman (1971) advocated higher investment in human capital formation and rolling back of the frontiers of learning. Bowman (1971) believed that people, every single person in the society is an important part of wealth of nation and as government and individual invest in human capital the amount of human wealth is continuously augmented.

It is strongly believed that the liberalization and diversification of learning unlocks the potentials of every individual not only in what is contributed to the wealth of society but also in striving to discover better technology at work which results in scientific and technological development and advancement.

Mkpa (2009) in further rationalizing the use of ICT in teaching and learning under education liberalization and curriculum diversification posited that ICT is for human prospect. By this, its implication is that knowledge expansion beyond the frontiers of what is traditionally familiar and acceptable is taking place not every day but by the minute. The society is therefore faced with very compelling imperative of coming to terms with ever changing world including lesson delivery.

### **Process and Application of Using ICT in Teaching and Learning Social Studies**

If learners are to acquire more knowledge than they are taught, then teachers are to evolve strategies that will ensure that they teach more than they know. This however can be realized if both the teachers and learners become committed in the use of ICT in classroom interaction/lesson delivery.

Application of ICT in teaching and learning involves the use of digital equipment, hardware and software such as computer aided instruction and other computer based training software.

Computer based training softwares allow students to learn at their own pace, in small steps and give feedback about how much they have learned.

Another process of application is through teleworking. Dave and Simon (2005) described teleworking as the process where staff work remotely from their office. In teaching and learning, lecturers can stay in contact with their students no matter where they are and can communicate with other lecturers around the world especially in research work.

With the advent of e-commerce which is an application of ICT whereby buyers can order goods and services online and check for the availability of a given product from suppliers online. Through e-commerce, some textbooks, journals, and other printing media can be ordered by teachers, students and school authorities alike to stock their libraries.

Yusuf (1998) contemplated that pedagogical rationale for using ICT focuses on the improvement of teaching and learning by the use of computer to enrich existing curriculum through the adoption of various instructional programmes. As a curriculum diversification, teachers can provide powerful learning opportunities by directing the learners to become responsible for finding the source of knowledge and information. By this process, the learners become active in defining their learning needs, finding and assessing the information/data collected, building on their knowledge base and communicating their discoveries. In doing this, teaching no longer centres around the transfer of content from the teacher to the learner. Instead, learning comes from learners' inquiry, critical and problem solving (which is the bane of social studies programme) based on information accessed from a variety of sources.

### **Implications and Problems of Using ICT in Teaching and Learning Social Studies**

Learning is now interaction based and the teachers' position has changed to become that of a facilitator, motivator and counselor. The use of ICT as a teaching and learning material is modern and recent because educators are challenged with new method of acquiring knowledge through knowledge sharing and communication with the global family.

Within the frame work of classroom interaction, teachers should be able to work in collaboration with learners as knowledge is applied to authentic situation. The work plan of the teacher can include the following phases:

- Providing basic/essential input or information.
- Activating learning through cooperative discovery.
- Providing more information on demand.
- Publishing the end result.

### **Successful Application and Process of Enhancing the Use of ICT in Teaching and Learning Social Studies**

The importance of ICT in the teaching of social studies is reinforced by its nature as an instrumental technology with relevance on print and electronic media and as a system approach to the solution of problems in overall lesson delivery process in social studies. Ndudim (2007) posited that the first hurdle for any innovator within an organization is to get the power to change the system. Unless our institutions of learning come to see how ICT operates outside the confines of their own environment, they will fail to apply ICT correctly and effectively.

In recognition of the significant role of teachers in the technological development, suggested areas of successful application that will yield dividend are made as follows:

**Fear of Change** Fear, anxiety and concern that teachers have about change must be addressed as adults do not change easily. More so that changes can seem intimidating and threatening. Using ICT as a teaching and learning tool in the classroom does so to an extent since it involves both changes in classroom procedures and the use of unfamiliar technologies.

To this end, Oginni (2009) suggested that the curriculum planners can be of help to teachers to overcome their fears, concerns and anxiety through in-service training. Teachers need to have a rudimentary understanding of how to operate computer. Such training according to Bitner (2002) should cover a working knowledge of standard input and output devices like mouse, disk drives, printers, speakers and others. It is equally important that teachers of social studies should know how to perform basic system operations such as programme installation, deletion and backing up files. Teachers of social studies should furthermore need to know basic file commands as save, delete and basic understanding of directing structure.

In order to enhance the use of ICT in teaching and learning of social studies, the teachers should acquire personal productivity skills (PPS) as a means to foster the teachers' interest. Oginni (2009) reaffirmed this view when he says that those who use PPS such as word processors, spread sheets, database, graphic programme on a regular basis become increasingly familiar with computer operation in the process of doing so. By this process, they loose some of their fears and come to appreciate that computer can make their job easier.

Teachers of social studies need to conceptualize how to use the various programmes which facilitate teaching and learning. Such as programme that can be used in large and small group instruction. Such programmes like power point and hyper studies can help learners and teachers with organization and presentation of

information. Social studies teachers need to be acquainted with programmes that promote problem solving, provide information, stimulate discussion and allow for drill and practice. By so doing, teacher-learner interaction becomes democratic and dividend result oriented.

Learning should be a drive that makes the use of ICT imperative in classroom interaction. By the use of ICT teachers and learners will become partners in the learning process. The use of ICT in classroom interaction alters the traditional model of instruction where the teacher is the sole provider of wisdom and the learners absorbing the knowledge. The use of ICT makes the learner to learn with technology rather than learning about technology.

This developmental change makes the knowledge needed for tomorrow's job to change before many of today's learners enter the job market. Therefore learners of today's generation must learn to guard and discover knowledge, actively communicate with others and solve problems so that they can become productive life long members of our society

To enhance this process of learning the teachers must properly prepare themselves technologically well so as to be able to cope well with the challenge of a changing technological and scientific world. Successful application for enhancing the role of using ICT in teaching social studies implies that both the teachers and the learners need to be motivated. The motivation to endure the frustration and turmoil of the change process from teacher centred approach of teaching to interactive technologies must be provided. Often the intrinsic motivation will come as they understand the possibilities that technologies can offer them with knowledge and skills of computer and internet use.

Another enhancing mechanism is the provision of basic infrastructure and enabling environment. These are major players in the integration of ICT in classroom. This problem lies in the fact that the teacher cannot make use of materials that do not exist in the school if there are no electricity and other source of power, the electronic gadgets become ornamental object. Likewise, if there are no computers and internet services all these ideas become utopia wishes. Therefore, these provisions must be made available for effective application of the use of ICT in teaching and learning social studies. The enabling environment includes the expeditious support of technical personnel. A technical support for a personnel, who can trouble shoot and readily handle hardware and software problems as they occur. This view is supported by Oginni (2009) that when a problem occurs in a class, it is difficult or even impossible to ignore the learners and concentrate on restoring a technology resource breakdown. Therefore, for social studies teachers to be effective in the use of ICT in teaching and learning, technical personnel support/services become imperative.

### **Conclusion**

This paper stresses the important role of the teachers in using ICT to enhance teaching and learning process. Once skills have been developed, teachers will be ready to look for the ways to integrate ICT into their curricular activities and demonstrate its use to others because teachers are regarded as knowledge managers and dispensers.

The concern for all stakeholders in education is to find ways of making the teacher enjoy the benefits offered by ICT application so as to improve and enhance the attainment of enriched educational experiences for learners.

### **Recommendation**

Access to ICT and internet should be made readily available to all staff and students in order to facilitate the learning of social studies and foster practices as key features of how ICT can enhance the teaching and learning of social studies. All staff should be made to acquire computer skill as a basic element in their profession. In furtherance to this is that every school should make it as a policy to establish an ICT institute within the reach of the teachers and the learners.

Ogum (2009) advocated that to become confident, critical and creative users of ICT, teachers must have access to professional development programmes that would enable them have multiple skills both in the use of ICT and in task design. To make teachers to really integrate ICT into the classroom, government owned computer training institutes should be established for teacher's in-service training. Moreso, the government both at the federal and state levels who make decisions regarding the integration of ICT into the classroom must include teachers in the decision making. To this effect, teachers must be prepared to be active participating partners in the change process from the traditional to the modern dispensation.

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