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The Place of Computer Social Networks in Teaching and Learning of Social Studies in Nigeria Schools

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Abstract

It is a known fact that teachers struggle with motivating students to learn. This is especially prevalent in social studies classrooms in which students perceive social studies as boring. This article supports and advocates the use of technology in social studies as a means to motivate students by engaging students in the learning process with the use of a familiar instructional tool that improves students' self-efficacy and self-worth. The technology employed here is the Computer Social Networks popularly called Social Media. This technology that has potential to motivate students is discussed as it relates to expectancy-value model of motivation which focuses three areas of motivational theory: value referring to students' beliefs about the importance or value of a task, expectancy referring to students' beliefs about their ability or skill to perform the task and affective; meaning emotional reactions to the task and self-worth evaluation.

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In getting a befitting definition of what social studies means, the writers referred to the 1992, National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) adopted definitions of "social studies":Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. (NCSS Task Force on Standards for Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies, 1993) and Zarrillo J.J (2013)

Social studies is the interdisciplinary integration of social science and humanities concepts for the purpose of practicing problem solving and decision making for developing citizenship skills on critical social issues. This is a useful definition. It emphasizes the ultimate goal of social studies teaching—to help students think critically and to use what they know to be active citizens. In this manner it could be viewed that social studies as the study of people should help students acquire knowledge, master the processes of learning, and become active citizens.

People are the domain of social studies. This includes people as nearby as family and as far away as those who live in the most distant nations. It includes people living now, those who lived long ago, and those who will live in the future. Social studies has the potential to be the best part of the school day because it is when children connect with other people. As children learn about others, they will be fascinated by differences among cultural groups, while at the same time they will find the commonalities that create a shared sense of humanity. It is a complex task to teach about people, and information must come from many fields of study. The NCSS definition points out that it is the various disciplines of the social sciences and humanities that provide the content for what is taught during social studies. While history and geography should serve as the core of social studies, it is imperative that the other social sciences are not neglected; rather, they should be a significant part of every social studies program. The other social sciences are anthropology, economics, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology.

The humanities (literature, the performing arts, and the visual arts) are an important part of social studies, too (Eisner, 1991). The arts serve two functions. First, they help children better understand the people, places, and ideas they study. Stories, songs, dances, plays, paintings, statues, and other works of art allow students to become acquainted with the people who created them. Second, children can show us what they know by expressing themselves through the arts. Studies pointout; social studies involve integration of the social sciences and the humanities. A good social studies unit of study should pull information and ideas from several different fields.

The knowledge children acquire as a part of social studies tends to be the highest priority for teachers, parents, and the children. The common perception is that this is what social studies is all about—knowing things like the location of the Rocky Mountains, the conditions aboard a slave ship, and the purpose of a mailbox. This is too limited a view because social studies must be a vehicle for children to become better communicators, thinkers, researchers, computer users, and artists. Finally, all three definitions state that the ultimate goal of social studies is active citizenship in our society, as our students use the knowledge they have acquired and the processes they have mastered to make communities, the nation, and the world better places. This is the position of the NCSS, that the "core mission of social studies education is to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and values that will enable them to become effective citizens" (NCSS Task Force on Revitalizing Citizenship Education, 2001).

In the end, there probably will never be one universally accepted definition of social studies. This lack of consensus reflects fundamental disagreements on the primary purpose of social studies. Consider the following points of view on social studies teaching and learning, expressed throughout the last 100 years:

- Social studies should promote the acceptance of cultural diversity since it involve the study of people and their culture and environment.
- Social studies should focus on the major events and important individuals in in the society. For instance in Nigeria it will focus on Nigerian history and seek to transmit to young people the Nigerian concepts of liberty and equality.
- Social studies should be issues centered, as students search for answers to problems and dilemmas confronted by people today and in the past.
- Social studies should enhance and develop democratic citizens resulting to loyal and patriotic noting that good citizens are also critics, participants and promoters of their nation.
- Social studies should focus on the big ideas of the social science disciplines, taking into cognizance both children and adults.
- Social studies should be child centered and permit students to pursue topics of personal interest.

Need for Teaching Social Studies in Schools

Viewing it holistically, Social studies has historically played a significant part in preparing future citizens to meet the local, national, and global human and natural challenges of the day (NCSS, 2001). At the forefront of the social studies is the importance of citizens coming together across their differences to build a better future. Today, the promotion of global citizenship education in social studies is particularly important to meet the needs of a new global age and to prepare students to function in their nation, as well as in a diverse global society (Banks, 2004; Compston, 2004; Goodman, 1992; Merryfield and Wilson, 2005; Parker, Ninomiya and Cogan, 1999; Yeager and Van Hover, 2004). As citizens, businesses, and organizations from around the world grow increasingly economically, politically, and environmentally connected,

there has been a growing call by social studies educators to prepare citizens for a globally interconnected age (Merryfield, 2002). In the United States the flagship professional organization for social studies teachers, the National Council for the Social Studies (2001), has consistently called for a social studies curriculum that prepares students for an increasingly global age.

Brown D. (2017) enumerated many reasons and importance of social studies. This work encapsulated its drive on the world, history, citizenship and means of livelihood as these are explained thus;

The World in Which We Live: Social studies education helps explain the world in which we live. Much like science teaches children to observe the physical aspects of life, social studies encourages children to open their minds to the many places humans live on this planet. Not only does the social studies curriculum teach physical geography, but as students learn about different places, they also become aware of the many cultural differences of the world's populations through the study of sociology and anthropology. As they learn more about cultural differences, students begin to find that there are a large number of cultural similarities as well.

A Sense of History: Studying social studies helps students figure out their role in society as well as their place in history. By studying the past, students learn how institutions, traditions and ideals change as society modernizes. They also learn how cause and effect influence relationships between individuals, groups and nations. As students mature, the study of history gives them the chance to develop their research skills and the ability to think critically. A sense of history gives students good background knowledge as they study other subjects, such as literature.

Citizenship: Social studies students learn they are part of a larger societal organization that must have structure to operate for the good of all the people in the group. This basic sense of citizenship starts in the primary school as students work to monitor classroom rules and expands as students study the electoral process, the branches of government and how citizens interact within the laws of a society in more advanced classes. The social studies curriculum also compares other types of government institutions around the world. Civic education which Nigerian school curriculumnow employed allows students to analyze foreign governments while at the same time developing an appreciation for the freedoms accorded citizens by the Constitution. Civic lessons cross interdisciplinary lines and are often a part of moral instructions, geography, history and sociology lessons.

Making a Living: Economic themes find their way into the social studies curriculum in a variety of ways. From the basic concept of want versus need taught in primary levels to advanced concepts such as global economic policy discussed in a advanced school current events class, economics is an integral part of social studies education. As students learn about the four factors of production — land, labor, capital and

entrepreneurship — they begin to realize that these all contribute to what goods and services are available for consumers. Students study economic trends as they study history so they can better understand events such as recessions. On a more personal level, economics teaches students the basics of handling their own finances and helps them set career goals aligned with their personalities. All these take their fundamental roots from social studies.

ICT and Social Networks and Reasons for ICT in Education

It is any online use of technology to connect people, enable them to collaborate with each other, and form virtual communities. Online social networking includes much more than Facebook and Twitter, is a sites which may allow visitors to send e-mails, post comments, build web content, and/ or take part in live chats.

Social networking has quickly transformed how people of all ages work, play and shop—and even how we elect presidents. Among students surveyed in a National School Boards Association study, 96 percent of those with online access reported using social networking, and half said they use it to discuss schoolwork. Despite this prevalence in everyday life, schools have been hesitant to adopt social networking as an education tool Bumgardner S and Knestis K, (2011).

Zaidieh A. J. Y, (2012) says it has been proved in the field of psychology and linguistics that process of the store information or vocabulary in human mind is determined by the nature of the psychological state of the recipient. It is also found that this idea is supported by the Greek philosophy of Aristotle when he emphasized in his theory of knowledge on the need to use some form of entertainment during the process of giving lessons. So it is sure that these sites will be useful tools that can generate a revolution in the field of education if the ability to control them to suit the requirements of knowledge and science is made.

Study Review

Overall, the social network sites focus heavily on building online communities bound together with common interests or activities. Thereby provide them with tools that help them to do so. In the field of E-Learning, the social network sites handled the big problem raised by educators in the recent period. For example, a lack of humanitarian aspect and described it as teaching lacks spirit. However, Social networks have helped to resolve some of these problems, by adding interactive side with a human, and make the participation of the human element in the educational process something important. That led to an increase to attract people toward elearning and some of researcher in the field of social sciences carrying out studies to examine this phenomenon and to clarify the reason behind the attraction educated about social network sites such as (Ractham and Firpo, 2011) and (Jiang and Tang, 2010). There are many study researches that confirm and support the usefulness of online sites in knowledge acquisition industry. Related studies reviewed by the writers are discussed thus;

Firstly, a study titled "Using Social Networking Technology to Enhance Learning in Higher Education: A Case Study using Facebook " Ractham, P. and Firpo, D. (2011). The study explores possibility of using social networking technology to enhance learning in a graduate-level introductory MIS course though Facebook. It is y applied at the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, Thammasat University, and took five months during the second semester of 2009-2010. Altogether, 69 students, 2 lecturers, and 1 assistant instructor took the role of active participants, while 6 non-registered students and 3 faculty members from the MIS and Finance department took the role of non-active participants. The researchers used the qualitative and quantitative method where lasted observation period for 105 days and explained the system usage protocols and designated different users' clusters. The paper organized as follow, the researchers examine the potential of using communities of practice and different Web 2.0 technologies within the realm of education. In addition use the social networking to improve learning in a graduate-level introductory MIS course. The researchers used the Facebook to be designed and implemented to enhance teaching pedagogy as well as create an engaging learning environment. Social networking technologies such as Facebook allow members to participate in a learning environment where the learning process can occur interchangeably from both inside and outside of the classroom. The results, there are benefits for successful use of social networking in education for both students and instructors. For students: some degree of informal learning through informal communication, support for collaboration, feedback on thoughts and collaboration independent of space and time. For instruction: gaining feedback from students and constant communication with students and produce an effective instructional technology for their customers. So, networking technology can be used effectively to foster a culture of learning, as a learning tool for both students and teachers. Furthermore, in the future, the social-networking sites will have the significant potential to expand teaching and learning out of classroom.

Secondly, another study titled Web-based Learning Platforms integrating Social Networking for Design Education at High Schools in China Jiang H and Tang M, (2010). The researchers addressed how to use the social networking to support education to build pedagogical model by using social networking and the study tried to identify the balance between developing individual creativity with group activity of collaboration. This model is created based on a traditional instructional model and gains the characteristic of design education. The social networking sites have become the main means of communication between the students and teacher. However, this model predicted to enhance learning efficiency. It can be seen from previous studies that the social networking sites will have a major role in improving and developing education both at the level of the students or teachers.

Social Network (Media) in Enhancing Teaching of Social Studies

Alix (2012) assert that with the push for online learning gaining traction in states across the country, educators coast to coast are capitalizing on new social media

sites like Facebook and Twitter for classroom purposes. While tech-savvy educators tout these websites as innovative ways of keeping classroom activities going well after the school bell rings, safety concerns over bullying and inappropriate use of social media have been dominating headlines and after-school specials for months. As the controversy heightens, one middle school is taking the matter into their own hands by addressing the appropriate use of social media in their social studies curriculum.

Certainly senior school students can benefit from sharing notes on Facebook and collaborating in Twitter discussions; however, in the public, yet some-what anonymous world of social media, these websites need to be approached with caution, especially with younger students learning the online ropes.

Looking carefully from the reviews, the writers outlined some of the social networks or media which should not be ignored in teaching social studies. This could be stated as follows;

CoveritLive(Blogging the Textbook): As a teacher, to make social studies more fun, one could use the CoveritLive blogging tool. While one talk and read from the textbook, some of the kids have a blog conversation about what is being presented.

It can be sure students are staying on topic because another teacher approves their comments. (Every comment must be approved by a teacher.) Every day, the kids rotate who gets to be on the laptops and have the live conversation. Other people from around the world can also join in.

CoveritLive is a publishing tool that allows users to instantly publish their blog posts, which allows it to serve somewhat like a chat room. Lisa Parisi and Christine Southard use CoveritLive to enliven discussion and motivate their students to master social studies material in their fifth-grade class. Students also used CoveritLive during President Obama's inauguration according to Bernard S. (2009).

Battle It Out: Bernard S. (2009) titled this as battle out, siting example like in history, instead of just reading about battles from World War II, have students recreate them on film. The students could then add a director's commentary over the video, highlighting the different parts of the battle. The teacher could keep the DVD and show it the following year. Maybe students could film a new battle each year. People personally learn more by doing and seeing things than by reading from a book. Social software like the Good Shooting Guide, Make TV, and the Apple Learning Interchange's Videography for Educators can be used to explore this.

MySpace: MySpace could be use in social studies class to create profiles about important people in history. Historical people are kind of boring when they are just read about in a textbook; students do better when they create something themselves. Those who tried it in a social studies class, found it turns to be an enjoyable lesson.

To teach this lesson, the teacher would explain to the students how to create a MySpace page and how to add pictures, songs, and videos about the person. Teacher would also show them how to add a creative background page that would relate to who the person was in history."

MySpace -- and its wildly popular cousin Facebook -- still hold the limelight when it comes to online social networking.

Skype: It is a good idea to use Skype in social studies for learning about other states and countries. To learn about a country, why not just ask the people who live there about it? Certainly the information they provide will be more real and true than what will be found on the Internet.

Skype is a way to communicate with people all around the world. All that is required is a computer, a special camera that can connect to the computer, a speaker, an address on Skype, and the other person's address. Then is set to Skype! One can see them and hear them, and if one wanted to use this to learn, one could interview the other person.

Wiki: A wiki is a Web site that's very helpful to students and teachers. The subject of a wiki page can be math, social studies, or anything else students are learning in school.First, students gather data and do research on the subject. Then they make a Web site and put in all the information they have gathered. For instance, if the subject is social studies, one could do a wiki project about Amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 and Nigeria Independence 1960.

A wiki is a Web page or collection of pages that allows any user to contribute and modify the content. In order to better understand the globe's time zones and connect with students around the world, in other to also contribute information about their local time zone and weather and give other reflections.

Summary and Conclusion

This study on social studies and computer social networking in classroom could give an explicit knowledge of what social studies is to students. In marrying it with technology today, it opens the reader to a wide scope of appreciating social media rather what it is being known for. Recent developments have created new opportunities for powerful social studies teaching assisted by technology. Major improvements have taken place in both hardware and software. Computers are much more powerful and versatile than they were a decade ago. Although many educational programs at that time were oriented toward drill and practice, it is now easy to find interactive and engaging programs. Using the right combination of hardware and software, teachers can develop lessons using social networks to enhance student skills in information retrieval, the presentation of data, the comparison and evaluation of different perspectives, and critical reflection and decision making.

As is often the case, efforts to take advantage of these opportunities in the classroom make important demands on individual teachers. Successful computer-based instruction in relation to social networks requires careful planning, informed choices of hardware and software, and the matching of educational programs to curricular objectives and student abilities. The purpose in this article was to identify the key considerations that should influence the selection of instructional technology in order to assist social studies educators to evaluate current products and assess the feasibility of their use in the classroom.

Recommendation
Incorporating social media instruction into classroom discussion should be second nature, especially as young students begin to join these social networks. Before teachers can begin to introduce students to the educational value of the internet, a crash course in appropriate use should be square one.

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