ANALYZING THE INTEGRATION OF 21ST CENTURY DIGITAL SKILLS IN SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA
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Abstract

This research paper investigates the present extent to which Nigerian tertiary institutions incorporate digital skills relevant to the twenty-first century into their Social Studies curricula. In addition, influencing factors and the efficacy of technology-enhanced learning strategies in this context will be evaluated. A survey was conducted among 29 Social Studies instructors from two tertiary establishments in Kogi State, and their answers pertained to the incorporation of digital competencies. The results of the analysis, which utilised a modified four-point Likert scale, were tabulated with the overall mean and standard deviation for each question computed. The results suggest that the implementation of technology-enhanced learning approaches in Social Studies is associated with improved levels of student engagement and critical thinking abilities. However, infrastructure constraints, difficulties in implementation, and inadequate opportunities for training and professional development were recognised as impediments. The mean value of 2.48 suggests that there is a moderate degree of consensus regarding the

positive impact of incorporating digital tools and resources on students' critical thinking abilities in the field of Social Studies. According to the substantial percentage of 65.5% for SA + A, a considerable segment of the participants expressed agreement or strong agreement with the given statement. The results offer significant implications for policymakers, educators, administrators, and researchers in their efforts to facilitate the seamless incorporation of digital competencies necessary for the twenty-first century into Social Studies curricula. The study suggests that in order to enhance digital tools, governmental bodies and other responsible institutions should address the challenges associated with instructors' and students' limited access to technology. Additionally, it suggests that educational institutions should be provided with opportunities for professional development, including sufficient training in technological technical know-how and the latest trends in educational technology programmes, to equip them with the requisite skills.

Keywords: 21st century digital skills, Integration, Social Studies instruction, Technology.

Introduction

Social Studies is essential in equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed to be well-informed, proactive, and involved members of society, especially in a quickly changing global landscape. The use of digital skills into Social Studies training has gained significant importance in the 21st century. Proficiency in digital skills within the field of Social Studies enables students to engage in a thorough examination and assessment of the abundant online information. Developing critical thinking abilities requires the vital capacity to access, appraise, and synthesise information from a variety of sources. Through their interaction with digital tools and resources, students acquire the ability to recognise bias, assess trustworthiness, and generate well-informed judgements (Binkley *et al.*, 2012). Incorporating digital skills into Social Studies curriculum enhances students' comprehension of worldwide

challenges and diverse cultures. By utilising digital tools and platforms, students have the ability to establish connections with persons and groups throughout the globe. This facilitates the development of cross-cultural understanding and empathy, as well as enables participation in online debates, collaborative projects, and virtual simulations (Hew & Brush, 2007). Acquiring this knowledge will cultivate a student's global attitude and provide them with a deep understanding of many viewpoints, thereby equipping them for the interconnectedness of the 21st century. Social Studies education offers an optimal environment for fostering digital citizenship abilities. Digital citizenship refers to the practise of behaving responsibly and ethically in digital environments, which includes ensuring online safety, protecting privacy, and engaging in polite communication online (Ribble, Bailey, & Ross, 2004). By acquiring digital skills, students gain the ability to responsibly navigate digital environments, participate in respectful discussions, and cultivate a strong understanding of digital ethics. These skills encompass information literacy, media literacy, and technological proficiency, enabling students to easily adapt to the constantly evolving digital landscape and access opportunities across different domains. Incorporating 21st century digital skills into Social Studies education is highly significant in equipping students with the necessary abilities to navigate the intricacies of the contemporary world. Nigerian higher education institutions have acknowledged the significance of incorporating digital competencies into the teaching of Social Studies. Numerous academic institutions have implemented measures to integrate technology-driven learning methods and digital resources into their educational programmes (Ugwoke, Eze, & Chukwuere, 2016). In order to facilitate students' access to digital resources, certain institutions have implemented e-learning platforms, online databases, and digital libraries (Akinlabi, 2020). These endeavours exemplify an increasing acknowledgment of the importance of digital skills in the field of Social Studies education.Notwithstanding the advancements achieved, there exist substantial obstacles impeding the incorporation of digital skills into Social Studies education in Nigerian higher

education institutions. Insufficient availability of technology and inadequate infrastructure are substantial obstacles (Ogunsola, 2015). Inadequate financial resources for procuring and maintaining technology, absence of internet connectivity, and obsolete computer laboratories hinder the successful incorporation of technology (Ugwoke *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, there could be a deficiency in training and professional development opportunities to enhance educators' ability to successfully utilise digital tools (Idiegbeyan-ose & Afolabi, 2017). Insufficient funds, subpar infrastructure, shortage of competent educators, reluctance to embrace change, insufficient training for teachers and students, limited availability of reliable internet, concerns about cybersecurity and intellectual property rights, and cultural obstacles are some of the main obstacles that hinder the smooth incorporation of digital skills in Social Studies teaching (Balogun *et al.*, 2020; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019; Olojo & Popoola, 2021). These obstacles can impede the implementation of technology-enhanced learning methods and restrict students' availability to digital materials and tools. Nevertheless, the level of integration of digital skills into Social Studies training in Nigerian tertiary institutions is not yet well-defined. Insufficient knowledge in this area impedes educators' compre-hension of the efficacy and influence of technology-enhanced learning methods in Social Studies classrooms. Furthermore, it is necessary to investigate the elements that impact the effective incorporation of digital skills and the difficulties encountered by educators in adopting these tactics.

Objectives of the Study

The following research objectives were used to guide this paper:

i.   To determine the current level of integration of 21st century digital skills in Social Studies instruction in tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria; and

ii.   To assess the effectiveness of technology-enhanced learning strategies in Social Studies instruction in tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this paper:

i. What is the current level of integration of 21st century digital skills in Social Studies instruction in tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria?

ii. To what extent do educators incorporate technology-enhanced learning strategies in Social Studies instruction in tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria?

Methods

This research employed a descriptive-analytical studies research design. It is non-experimental, and conducted without interfering with the natural setting or manipulation of study variables. The data gathered are directed toward the determination of the nature of a situation, as it existed at the time of study. The target population for the study includes lecturers of Social Studies in two tertiary institutions namely: Federal College of Education, Okene; and Prince Audu University, Anyigba in Kogi State. This paper applied the census sampling technique. In census sampling, data is collected from every individual or unit in the population of interest, providing a comprehensive representation of the entire population. (UN Statistics Division, 2010). The research instrument that was used to collect the data was a structured questionnaire titled Integration of Digital Skills in Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire (IDSTIQ). The questionnaire contains ten (10) items in all for the respondent. The data collected from the respondents were analysed using frequency distribution, and percentages, while Mean score and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the current level of integration of 21st century digital skills in Social Studies instruction in tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Response on the current level of integration of 21st century digital skills in Social Studies instruction in Nigeria tertiary institutions

S/N	SA	A	SD	D	% SA	% A	% SD	% D	Mean	SD
Do you agree that students frequently incorporate digital tools and resources during Social Studies instruction?"	6	16	5	2	20.7%	55.2%	17.2%	6.9%	2.275	0.83
To what extent do you agree that digital skills are integrated into the Social Studies curriculum?	3	14	9	3	10.3%	48.3%	31.0%	10.3%	2.34	1.12
To what extent do you agree on the proficiency of students in using digital tools and resources for Social Studies learning?	1	10	12	6	3.4%	34.5%	41.4%	20.7%	2.76	1.19
To what extent do you agree that there are challenges in integrating digital skills into Social Studies instruction?	10	14	3	2	34.5%	48.3%	10.3%	6.9%	1.97	1.01
"Do you agree that there are limitations or barriers hindering the effective integration of digital skills in Social Studies teaching?"	5	13	7	4	17.2%	44.8%	24.1%	13.8%	2.52	1.02

The data gathered regarding the current level of integration of 21st century digital skills in Social Studies instruction in tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria, reveals several key insights.

The mean values across all statements suggest a moderate level of agreement among the lecturers, implying that they generally acknowledge the presence of digital tools and resources in Social Studies instruction and the integration of digital skills into the curriculum. However, there is notable variability in the responses, as indicated by the standard deviations ranging from 1.01 to 1.19, highlighting differing perspectives among the lecturers.

The first and second statements demonstrate that while there is a moderate level of agreement regarding the incorporation of digital tools and resources and the integration of digital skills into the curriculum, there is a significant proportion of lecturers who do not perceive these integrations as frequent or adequate.

The third statement reveals that lecturers generally agree that students' proficiency in using digital tools and resources for Social Studies learning is moderate. However, a substantial percentage perceives students' proficiency as lacking, indicating a divergence in opinions among lecturers.

The fourth statement reflects a relatively high level of agreement among lecturers regarding the challenges in integrating digital skills into Social Studies instruction, with the majority acknowledging the presence of these challenges as a significant barrier.

The fifth statement indicates a moderate level of agreement on the existence of limitations or barriers hindering the effective integration of digital skills in Social Studies teaching. However, there is also a notable proportion of lecturers who do not fully agree with the presence of these limitations or barriers.

In summary, the holistic interpretation of the table demonstrates that while there is general agreement among lecturers on the presence of digital tools and skills in Social Studies instruction, there are varying opinions and perspectives, indicating the need for further investigation and potential improvements in the integration of digital resources land skills in the curriculum and instructionm

Research Question 2: To what extent do educators incorporate technology-enhanced learning strategies in Social Studies instruction in tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Response on the effectiveness of technology-enhanced learning strategies in Social Studies instruction in Nigeria tertiary institutions

Distribution of Respondents Based on Challenges Faced by Teachers

S/N	SA	A	SD	D	% SA	% A	% SD	% D	Mean	SD
Technology-enhanced learning strategies have enhanced my students' engagement in Social Studies instruction.	8	12	5	4	27.6%	41.4%	17.2%	13.8%	2.14	1.08
The integration of digital tools and resources has improved students' critical thinking skills in Social Studies.	4	15	8	2	13.8%	51.7%	27.6%	6.9%	2.48	0.99
I face challenges in effectively implementing technology-enhanced learning strategies in my Social Studies instruction.	10	11	6	2	34.5%	37.9%	20.7%	6.9%	2.24	1.01
The current infrastructure limitations hinder the effectiveness of technology-enhanced learning strategies in Social Studies teaching.	9	13	4	3	31.0%	44.8%	13.8%	10.3%	2.17	0.94
The lack of adequate training and professional development opportunities hinders the effective implementation of technology-enhanced learning strategies in my Social Studies instruction.	7	14	5	3	24.1%	48.3%	17.2%	10.3%	2.34	0.99

The data gathered regarding the effectiveness of technology-enhanced learning strategies in Social Studies instruction in Kogi State, Nigeria, reveals several key insights.

Firstly, the mean values across all statements suggest a moderate level of agreement among the respondents, indicating that technology-enhanced learning strategies have made a noticeable impact on their teaching practices. This moderate level of agreement is reflected in the mean values, which fall between 2.14 and 2.48, implying that educators generally perceive a positive influence of these strategies. Secondly, when examining the percentage distributions, it becomes evident that a substantial proportion of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with each statement. The percentages for "SA + A" (Strongly Agree + Agree) range from 65.5% to 76.2%, indicating a consensus among educators that technology-enhanced learning strategies have a positive effect on student engagement, critical thinking skills, and overall teaching effectiveness. However, it's worth noting that there is some variance in the responses, as indicated by the standard deviations ranging from 0.94 to 1.08. This suggests that while there is general agreement, there are differing perspectives and experiences among the respondents, particularly in regard to challenges faced in implementation and the influence of infrastructure limitations.

The interpretation shows that, on the whole, educators in Kogi State acknowledge the benefits of technology-enhanced learning strategies in Social Studies instruction. While there is a predominant consensus on the positive impact, the variability in responses highlights that there are specific challenges and differences in perception that need to be addressed to optimize the effectiveness of these strategies.

Discussions

The study results are consistent with the initial research goal, which was to assess the incorporation of 21st century digital abilities in Social Studies teaching. The findings demonstrate that the implementation of technology-enhanced learning methods has had a beneficial effect on student engagement, aligning with prior

research conducted by Olaniyi and Adebiyi (2021). Their study revealed that technology can be effectively utilised to foster captivating and interactive learning experiences, thereby facilitating the cultivation of critical thinking and problem-solving proficiencies among students. Additionally, the research revealed that technology has the potential to individualise training and offer distinct learning opportunities for students. A notable number of the participants indicated an increased degree of involvement, in line with prior studies highlighting the capacity of digital tools and resources to enhance the educational process. There is evidence of a significant incorporation of modern digital abilities in Social Studies teaching in Kogi State, Nigeria, resulting in enhanced student involvement.The study investigated the efficacy of technology-enhanced learning practises in the context of Social Studies training. The findings suggest that the incorporation of digital tools and resources has played a role in fostering the advancement of students' critical thinking abilities. These results align with the prior study conducted by Adedoyin & Adedoyin (2019), which revealed that students who utilised technology-enhanced learning methods in Social Studies classes exhibited notably superior critical thinking abilities compared to their counterparts who did not. Furthermore, it supports the claim that when students interact with digital tools and resources, they acquire the ability to cultivate critical thinking abilities. These findings indicate that the use of technology-enhanced learning methods in Kogi State, Nigeria, effectively promotes the development of critical thinking abilities in pupils.

In addition, the study revealed the difficulties that educators encounter while applying these tactics, including restricted technological access, insufficient technical assistance, and inadequate training prospects. This highlights the necessity of comprehensive training programmes to provide educators with the essential abilities to proficiently incorporate technology into instruction, as demonstrated in prior research. Furthermore, the belief that existing infrastructure restrictions impede the efficacy of technology-enhanced learning methodologies is consistent with previous studies that emphasise the influence of infrastructure

shortcomings on the successful incorporation of digital tools and resources in educational environments.

Conclusion

From the aforementioned findings, it is possible to derive many conclusions on the efficacy of technology-enhanced learning methodologies in the instruction of Social Studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Technology-enhanced learning practises have a beneficial effect on student engagement in Social Studies instruction and help build critical thinking abilities. Nevertheless, impediments encountered by educators were found during the implementation process, indicating the presence of hurdles. In order to fully optimise the advantages of technology-enhanced instruction, it is imperative to confront and overcome these problems. Moreover, the recognition of infrastructure constraints as obstacles that impede the accessibility and usage of digital tools and resources is highlighted, eventually influencing the overall efficacy of these tactics in the teaching of Social Studies. Furthermore, the absence of sufficient training and chances for professional growth has been identified as a hindrance to the effective application of technology-enhanced learning methodologies. This highlights the necessity for comprehensive training programmes and activities to improve their integration.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations can be made to improve the efficiency of technology-enhanced learning methodologies in Social Studies instruction in Nigerian tertiary institutions:

To enhance digital tools for students and instructors, it is essential to tackle the obstacles related to restricted technology access and offer professional development opportunities for educators. In order to fully leverage the educational potential of technology, both students and teachers must access to it. Authorities and other organisations tasked with enhancing digital resources should strive to tackle this problem by furnishing devices and internet connectivity to individuals in need.

Furthermore, educators must possess the necessary competencies to proficiently use technology into their teaching. Educational institutions can facilitate this by offering professional development possibilities, including training sessions on technical proficiency and contemporary advancements in educational technology programmes.

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