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# EMERGING TRENDS IN SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTIONS: A CASE FOR DIGITAL TECHNOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION

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***Abstract***
*The study aims at investigating emerging trends in Social Studies instructions: a case for digital technological and pedagogical innovation. Integrating unfamiliar technology in the classroom often requires ample technological resources and professional development. However, these resources are often not available. It begins by providing an overview of recent trends in the access and use of new technologies as well as a summary of online opportunities and risks. It then explores a variety of factors, including the concept of social studies, an overview of social studies thought around the world and in Nigeria, technology and social studies education, the place of teachers in technology integration, approaches to technology integration, and condition/constraint to successful technology integration in education. Building digital resilience is an important skill for 21st-century children. Effective strategies to accomplish this include encouragement of active rather than passive Internet use, e-safety in the school curriculum, and teacher and parental Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support. A focus on the effects of new emerging technologies*

*would be helpful for future research and also boost the nation's goal on education.*

**Keywords:** Digital technology, Pedagogy, Innovation, Social Studies,

## Introduction

Rapid technological developments and access to digital learning are changing today's classrooms. Digital technology can help students become more active agents in their learning and provide teachers with accessible data, so they can make effective data-driven decisions when planning quality instruction. Teacher integration of technology can lead to increased student learning and engagement (Darling-Hammond, Zielezinski, & Goldman, 2014) and computers can be used to personalize instruction for students with diverse needs (Bouck, 2016).Technology also has possible socio-cultural implications because of its potential to function as a "third space" in education, the intersection of everyday knowledge and institutional knowledge thereby creating a "productive cultural space for learning" (Bhabha, 1994; McCarthey, Kennett, Smith, & West, 2017). Additionally, technology has the potential to be motivating and enhance student learning in subject areas that students may perceive as less appealing, such as social studies (Heafner, 2004).Meaningful use of technology to support social studies curriculum includes virtual field trips (Shriner, Clark, Nail, Schlee, &Libler, 2010), interactive websites, apps (Waters, Kenna, & Bruce, 2016), and web-based digital libraries. Digital videos can be used to encourage critical thinking or to build historical empathy (Bell & Bull, 2010) and blogs or photo blogs have been used to facilitate disciplinary literacy (Barrow, Anderson, & Horner, 2017).

These tools may be used in conjunction with brief texts or historical fiction to support the acquisition of content knowledge (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Some historical fiction selections can be content-rich and less overwhelming for younger students and those who read below grade level. In addition, several studies

have demonstrated the benefit of using cognitive organizers on the computer to enhance social studies learning (e.g., Boon, Burke, Fore, &Hagan-Burke, 2006; Boon, Burke, Fore, & Spencer, 2006).The increasing integration of technology in social studies instruction is a practice embraced by the social studies education community and promoted in discipline books and journals (Hammond, 2014). With teacher scaffolding, technology can extend student learning of content knowledge and promote greater inclusion of local history. Technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge (TPACK) is a widely adopted conceptual framework for thinking about the integration of its namesakes' components (Gómez, 2015; Hammond &Manfra, 2009; Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

When teachers add technological knowledge (TK), they are considering other ways to accomplish the task at hand or enhance learning by selecting and using different technologies. In the content classroom specifically, a comprehensive model for how to effectively incorporate technology into one's pedagogy is in the early stages of development (Gómez, 2015).Despite the promising impact of teaching with technology, and a widely accepted conceptual model, a large body of literature has demonstrated the challenges with integrating technology across the curriculum. Teachers may lack technological knowledge (Mumtaz, 2000; Gorder, 2008), question the usability and value of the technology for enhancing teaching and learning (Ertmer, 2005), and struggle to select and meaningfully connect the technology to the content and the expected educational outcomes (Gorder, 2008; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011). For example, in a survey of middle school teachers of science, language arts, and social studies, most respondents reported that students never used technology for writing blogs, emails, autobiographies, biographies, or lab reports (Graham, Capizzi, Harris, Hebert, & Morphy, 2014). Lack of consistent access to technology (McCarthey et al., 2017) and limited or no professional development opportunities related to technology are identified barriers to utilization (McCarthey et al., 2017; Waters et al., 2016).

Additionally, if the technology tool can provide students' performance data, teachers may struggle with knowing how to make sense of it and use it inadequately (Mandinach& Gummer, 2013). Transforming the use of technology in the classroom to be more student-centered and aligned with the goals of the curriculum has proven to be challenging for teachers (Hutchison & Woodward, 2018). When technology is supplemental to instruction or included as an add-on and not aligned with the instructional purpose, it does not enhance student learning to the fullest. Teachers, for example, may assign students to play online games as part of center-based instruction or ask students to type a paper on the computer in the back of the room.In these examples, teachers are using technology but not necessarily integrating technology to improve student learning. Even when teachers attempt to integrate technology for learning, they tend to do so in a prescriptive and limiting way, thus discouraging collaboration and creativity (McCarthey et al., 2017). In summary, evidence in the literature indicates that teachers typically have not integrated technology into their pedagogy, they have been using it for general purposes such as displaying information to students (Funkhouser & Mouza, 2013), or they have not used it to its full potential to enhance student learning.

While research has identified the barriers teachers face when considering the integration of technology, less is known about how in-service teachers who are technologically savvy and open to facilitating and mediating student-centered learning experiences navigate the process of integrating technology in the classroom. A case study of two social studies teachers' effective use of literacy and technology illustrated the varying degrees of technology integration in a content classroom (Curry &Cherner, 2016). One teacher, for example, used technology to do things she would normally do, but the technology allowed her to do it faster and easier. The second teacher-facilitated student's use of technology extensively in his instruction and assessment practices. Similarly, teacher intentions and attitudes toward perceived successful integration and utilization of technology in the social studies

classroom have been explored (Gómez, 2015) but, specifically, how they plan for its use, respond to student performance, and make instructional decisions remains unclear.

The following report of our case study offers a unique perspective, in that it examines co-teachers planning for use of a technology-based tool to improve the quantity (i.e., number of words and number of sentences), organization, and overall quality of writing (e.g., elements of persuasion and transition words) of fourth and fifth-grade students during social studies instruction. The case study also revealed how these plans were executed in the classroom and how the teachers made instructional decisions during and after implementation. The purpose of this study was to better understand how teachers planned for, facilitated, and collaboratively problem-solved during the implementation of technology to improve student learning in general, and particularly, in writing.

## Concepts of Social Studies

Many countries of the world offer Social Studies as one of the subjects in their school curriculum. However, the definitions attached to this subject are not the same in all the countries where it is offered. To a large extent, its definition or meaning in any country depends on the objectives which the subject is aimed to achieve in that particular place (Ezegbe, 1999).

However, notwithstanding the variance in terms of definitions as conceptualized by different people and nations, a notable number of scholars in the field of Social Studies both within and outside Nigeria have proffered a workable definition of the concept of Social Studies that is very holistic, unique, scholarly and representative of the course both in terms of space and time.

Frost and Rowland as cited in Lawal (2003), state that "Social Studies is the study of human relationships, like human to human, human to institutions, human to physical environments and human to value system". Kissock (1981), defines it as "a study that equips youths with tools necessary for solving personal and community-related problems". In 1992, the National Council for

Social Studies in the United States officially defined Social Studies as; "An integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence and help young people develop the ability to make informed decisions as citizens of culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (NCSS, 2009).

Here in Nigeria, the Nigerian Educational Research Council, (NERC), report of the national workshop on primary education in 1973, describes Social Studies as "those common leanings of man's interactions with his social and physical environments". It continued by saying that; "it is not just only a study, but also a way of life, of how man influences, and is influenced by his physical, social, political, economic, psychological and cultural environments" (NERC, 1973).

Therefore, in Social Studies, man learns or studies the world in holistic and more interactive ways. He learns how to live at peace with his neighbours at home, with his colleagues at the office or work, with his business partners at industry, trade, and investment, as well as his responsibilities to the society and government and the responsibilities of the society and government towards him as a citizen. He becomes equipped with skills and can contribute meaningfully to the development of the society where he lives.

This argument is in line with the view of the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC, 1973) as quoted above seeing Social Studies as not just a study, but also a way of life.

Emphasizing the concept of Social Studies' definition in terms of man's relationship with the man in his environment indicates the concept of integration in Social Studies. For it is this concept of integration into a whole that makes Social Studies an innovation, a value-laden, problem-solving, and a unique subject, both in character and in training. This view is in line with the position held by Gillespie & Thompson (1973), that with the "integration of social studies, children learn about the world through the co-ordination of information, concepts, structures, and methods of the Sociologists, Economists, Historians, Geographers, Anthropologists, Political Scientists, and Psychologists". Thus the

concept of Social Studies as an integrated social science discipline is the more popular view of the subject in Nigeria, both from the side of government and among Social Studies educators.

Aclose examination of such concepts and these definitions that arise from them will reveal that what stands out vividly from them is that any meaningful definition of Social Studies in the Nigerian context must connect man and his environments. Perhaps, that is the reason why the Nigeria Educational Research Council, (NERC), described Social Studies as "those common learning of man's interaction with his social and physical environments". The concept of the environment of man embraces all the things that are found within a given place around an individual. One can talk of the environment of any place such as a school, church, market, hospital, classroom, a university, shrine, neighbourhood environment, office environment, business environment, and industrial or technical environment, just mention it. The list is endless – man everywhere anywhere, making a living for himself is an interest for Social Studies enquiry. For this, Ezegbe (1994), suggests that "perhaps it is this richness of Social Studies in interaction with man's total environment that makes Social Studies the best form of character molding through formal education"

## Origin of Social Studies Thoughts around the World

Social Studies as part of the school curriculum in any part of the world where it is offered exists because of the national needs of such a nation which it is meant to solve. One could not but infer that this assertion informs why experts in this field of study have continued to use such connections as problem-solving, value-laden, and critical-thinking in their attempts to show the relationship of Social Studies with society in connection with individuals. Wherever there is a social problem to be solved through education, Social Studies is utilized. This need or notion gave birth to Social Studies in the curricular of nations where it is offered as would be later shown in this work.

Social Studies thoughts around the world emerged due to social dilemmas that confronted nations of the world. In Britain for example, part of what led to the introduction of Social Studies in the British school curriculum was the problem of racism and the social stratification system that was prevalent in Britain around the 1920s. It was a similar reason in Germany, Japan, and China (Kissock, 1981). All the same, Social Studies thought originated in the United States of America in the 1920s when Harold Rugg, a professor at Teachers' College, Columbia University co-founded the National Council for the Social Studies, however as a school subject, its origin is in the 1950s. Before the Second World War – that is between 1939-1945 – Social Studies did not exist as a separate school subject (Ezegbe,1999).The issues that led to Social Studies thought cluster around the needs, particularly after the World War, to re-establish and to promote good human understanding and relationship among the peoples of the world generally and among the people of America particularly. At this time, in its national history, America was facing the problem of disunity, disintegration, disillusionment, economic depression, and recession. Before now, American citizens had believed so much in the American dream, and in the aphorism that America is a land of opportunities, where there is equal opportunity for all citizens, but the aftermath of the World War and the Cold War brought a stark reality to the face of American citizens that is very contrary to the American dream, that made them begin to lose hope in their beloved nation and many of them became out rightly disillusioned, thus the problem of nation-building ensued.

It was at this time that Social Studies was introduced in the American school system to tackle the challenges (Arnold &Meirer, 1969). There was also the issue of reconciliation among the peoples and countries that took part in the War, and of creating a better society for humanity. It was believed that these aims would be achieved through a broad-based subject that would give proper information about the various peoples of the world. Thus after the Soviet Union had launched Sputnik 1 on October 4th, 1957, the United States of America was forced by this singular event, to review its secondary school curriculum. It described the then

Social Studies programme as narrow in scope.This assertion is supported by the statement from Pratt (1980), when he argued that "had Social Studies teaching been less insular and complacent, the American public might not have been laboring under the illusion that The Soviet Union of 1957 was still a pre-technological peasant society". This is the situation in which America found itself in, so there was the need to develop a new approach to the solution of problems. There was the problem of disunity, religious differences, ethnic or racial prejudices, and rivalries, there was the problem of production and distribution, inflection, crime, poverty, frustration, and so on, as a result of the World Wars and the Cold War in America and Europe as stated by (Ezegbe,1994).

Critical scrutiny of these problems as mentioned above would reveal that they are social issues and that they are also interconnected in every ramification. Therefore if a solution were to be sort, via the school social science curricular, it must be found within the ambit of a school subject that can touch on all or almost all the aspects of human life, and Social Studies is the right choice. Not that the traditional school subjects such as History, Political Science, Geography, etc are not problem-solving, but their strait-jacket nature makes them deficient in their separateness, and less integrative than Social Studies.

## Origin of Social Studies Thoughts in Nigeria

Having traced the origin of Social Studies thoughts around the world, and factors that have compelled nations of the world to seek solutions in Social Studies as a school subject, it is then compellingly penitent that it's historical development in Nigeria, as well as reasons for its adoption into the Nigeria school curricular, and the propriety of using it as a tool for nation-building vis-à-vis the quest for national integration in Nigeria be emphasized.

## Technology and Social Studies

There has been a precarious relationship between social studies and technology. While some educators have been fascinated by the potential of technology to enhance teaching and learning, many schools have lagged in assimilating technology into instruction (Berson, 1996). Shaver (1999) expressed doubt that technology will ever incite instructional reform in social studies, and Pahl (1996) noted that social studies educators have been apprehensive about modifying instruction to incorporate technology. This lingering apprehension has led some researchers to conclude that Social Studies has not appreciably changed as a result of technology (Martorella, 1997; White, 1997).Instructional decision-making in Social Studies has been based on a limited knowledge base, and as a result, computer use among students in social studies education has often relied on basic applications of technology as a tool for word processing or accessing factual information. Yet, there is the potential for technology to be fostered as a tool that overcomes the traditional isolation of the classroom setting (Braun, 1997), provides access to expansive resources (Becker, 1999), and improves overall productivity (Saye, 1998).

To achieve the desired gains with technology, social studies methods courses must not focus only on making teachers proficient at using technology but must promote strategies to integrate technology to enhance teaching and learning (Cantu, 2000). Technology-rich instruction models' effective use explores the barriers and benefits of technology integration (Keiper, Harwood, & Larson, 2000), and thereby surmount the traditional absence of technology in methods courses (Rose &Winterfeldt, 1998). Efforts to assist teachers in the effective integration of technology in teaching and learning will enhance students' performance in social studies.

## Teachers' Place in Technology Integration

Social science educators have advocated the integration of ICT within the spectrum of social science instruction (Keengwe 2007).

The idea of technology integration has been misconstrued by lots of people as teachers' ability to use technology. Angers and Matchmes (2005) indicate that to 'integrate' implies incorporating technology into the instructional process to engender effective teachers' teaching and learners' learning. Dockstader (1999) remarks that technology integration does not imply having the technology drive the curriculum; rather, it indicates situations that are having the curriculum drive technology usage. Painter(2001), however, notes that technology integration requires teachers' readiness and flexible ability to incorporate technology into teaching activities with a high level of teaching skills based on curriculum knowledge, knowledge of students' abilities, students' needs, and a reasonable level of technology literacy. The International Society for Technology in Education (1999) identifies three primary principles of infusing Information and Communication Technology into teacher education. These are: ICT should be holistically infused into teacher education programme; ICT should be introduced in context, and Learners should be exposed to innovative technology support in the teacher education programme.

It is obvious from the above principles that teachers are not expected to be seen within the education system as knowledge dispensers or repositories of knowledge, but rather as facilitators of learning. The role of the teacher in integrating technology into the teacher education programme goes beyond merely having knowledge about the computer technologies and software, but having the required and well-thought-about information, skills, ideas to construct new knowledge and ability to effectively infuse technology into the instructional process(Kainth and Kaur 2009; Morehead and La Beau 2005). Technology integration thus becomes a reality only with teachers' ability to effectively use the technology technically and pedagogically (Achcoso 2003). The presence of technology in the school will not automatically enhance teaching and learning without teachers' necessary input. Angers and Machtmes (2005) emphasize that teachers' adjustment of mindset, readiness, positive disposition to technology use and a reasonable level of competence in

technology use for instructional purposes should be part of the basic elements of the teacher education programme.

## Approaches to Technology Integration

Technology integration into teacher education could be approached from different perspectives (Kainth and Kaur 2009). Some of these approaches are discussed below:

*ICT Pedagogy Approach*: This is an approach that is directed towards broadening the knowledge and understanding of pre-service teachers on effective technology integration methods to boost their computer self-efficacy and competence. The main target of this approach is to expose the pre-service teachers to a degree of understanding about the 'why' and 'how' to integrate technology skills in school subject teaching and learning, thereby exploring the potentials of constructivism principles.

*Practice-driven Approach*: The focus of this approach is not mere theoretical use of ICT but rather practical exposure to ICT use and realistic exploration of technology potentials. With this, social science teacher educators have wide opportunities to access technology facilities available at workplaces, demonstrate effective use of the facilities and improve on personal skill activities designed in conjunction with the cooperating teacher or tutor-teacher and eventual management of such activities within the classroom settings.

*ICT Skills Development Approach*: The objective of this approach is mainly to equip the pre-service teachers with skills, information, and training about the general use of both software and hardware to facilitate effectiveness in the educational process and context.

*Subject-Specified Approach*: Technology can be infused into specific subjects. Through this approach, the social science educator introduces learners to a new method of learning and exposure to active, practical-oriented, and experiential learning via technological devices. This type of approach gives the teacher and students access to technology during the instructional process.

## Conditions and Challenges for Promoting Successful Technology Integration

Successful integration of technology is guaranteed if teachers perceive technology as relevant in teaching and learning (Angers and Matchmes 2005). Skill development in technology usage requires commitment and the courage to adopt innovations. Alexiou-Ray, Wilson, Wright, and Peirano (2003) remark that for technology to be successfully integrated into the curriculum, teachers must be fully equipped with the necessary tools and skills required to make them functional in technology-oriented classrooms. Jegede (2009) reiterates that teachers' training in technology usage should go beyond mastering computer hardware, basic software, and keyboard practice; such training should be extended to web and e-learning skills, computer-assisted instruction, and computer-managed learning, among others. Hence, teacher educators should be moved from 'learning to use technology' to such an essential and needed stage of 'using technology to learn'.

Titterington (2000) emphasizes that 'integrating technology into teaching is more or less like leaving the comfort zone, based on personal or individual commitment'. Successful integration of technology happens when teachers are prepared for it (Jegede 2009). Social change is neither a sudden nor a drastic event, but rather a gradual process. Therefore, teachers need ample time to learn the techniques of new technologies and the processes involved in integrating such technologies into the instructional process. Teachers should be allowed to develop and implement activities that are driven by technology during the instructional process to allow for proper technology integration (Gulbahar 2008).

Several challenges could hinder teacher educators from effectively integrating technology into the teacher education programme. Social science educators are lagging in utilizing technological innovations for instructional purposes (Anderson 2001; Becker and Wong 2000). Many teachers are hesitant to use technology during teaching and learning because of the teachers'

low level of computer competence, and lack of computer experience and technology integration still within the educational setting. When teachers are trained, they develop technical expertise and improve inexperience as they infuse technology into their classrooms. The horizon of teachers is widened as they are exposed to a wide variety of software programmes that are useful in enhancing effective teaching and learning (Zhao and Hoge 2004). Teachers are inhibited from effectively integrating technology into the teacher education programme when they lack easy and frequent access to technology equipment (Friedman2006; McGlinn 2007; Norrris, Sullivan, Poirot, and Solway 2003). This is a major source of hindrance in the Nigerian environment.

## Conclusion

Criticisms of the education system have reflected that student continues to receive an archaic education while attending school in the 21st century. Although social studies have existed as a discrete discipline for over eighty years, traditional, teacher-, and textbook-centered methods of instruction dominate the classroom learning experience (Dunn, 2000). Technology has typically been assimilated into existing roles and functions of social studies instruction, and little in the way of transformations of teaching and learning occurred during the formative period of its use.As the country aspires to become one of the leading world economies in the world, she must borrow from and adopt best practices from around the globe and intensify efforts at integrating technology into her teacher education programmes. With increased funding, judicious utilization of resources, capacity building for teacher educators, and proper monitoring and evaluation, the initial problems can be reduced to a tolerable minimum to usher in an improved regime of technologically-enriched social science education in Nigerian schools, colleges, and universities.

## Suggestions

Based on the study the following recommendations were presented that more research is needed to investigate how

teachers in technology-rich school environments are using technology daily. Also, there must be a deeper understanding of the impact of students' lack of training on teachers' perception and use of technology. There is a need to validate the negative impact of school filtering systems on social studies teachers' use of technology. There needs to be more research to confirm the process of becoming an enthusiastic technology user. There should be more research on the various methods used by Social Studies teachers in their classrooms.

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