
**EXPLORING THE ROLES OF INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA IN
THE 21ST CENTURY SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING-
LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS**

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Abstract

This paper was anchored on the roles of instructional media in the 21st century Social Studies teaching-learning activities in Nigerian schools. The Instructional media referred to are all forms of information carriers which are used to clarify abstract or difficult concepts in Social Studies. These materials are indispensable in the hands of resourceful Social Studies teachers. For a better understanding of this discourse, the paper did a conceptual clarification of such terms as “instructional media”, “teaching”, the “teacher” and Social Studies. The categories of instructional media were brought to the fore. Nonetheless, the paper also examined the values of instructional materials to Social Studies teaching and learning; emphasizing that Social Studies learning cannot be meaningful and effective without instructional media. The paper also highlighted some of the attributes of the 21st century classroom Social Studies teaching-learning activities which are anchored on constructivism. The paper did not fail to mention some of 21st century Social Studies teaching and learning strategies such as jigsaw, venn diagram, concept mapping and cognitive apprenticeship

and so on. The paper suggested that advocacy the 21st century classroom Social Studies teacher should not only be meaningful and effective use of instructional media in Social Studies teaching-learning process but enliven the instructional process by ensuring that it is Social Studies learner-centered and the learner is actively engaged.

Keywords: Instructional Materials, Instructional Media, Teaching, Teacher and Social Studies.

Introduction

In recent times, the education industry faces lots of problems especially those that border on teaching and learning in general and Social Studies teaching and learning in particular. The attempts made at solving these numerous problems have led to the use of innovative teaching-learning systems and approaches. This innovative perspective involves the use of organized combination and utilization of people, materials, facilities, equipment, and procedures to achieve the desired instructional objectives. There are other concepts that are synonyms for instructional materials – instructional media, educational media, learning resources, curriculum materials, educational technology materials and so on. They virtually mean the same thing. They all involve media (materials) derived from the communication revolution, which can be used to promote Social Studies teaching and learning processes. The 21st century active Social Studies learning instructional strategies anchor on a constructivist perspective of learning. That the Social Studies learner has potential of constructing his or her own knowledge if he or she is provided with a rich learning environment is an important achievement of the Social Studies teacher in the use of instructional media in the Social Studies teaching and learning activities. This is opposed to the traditional practice of giving every information to the learner, in which case he or she is expected to reproduce it. Social Studies learning in the 21st century is learner-centred. Essentially the learner engages himself or herself in all hands-on and minds-on Social Studies learning through collaboration with peers. The non-availability of adequate

instructional media has become a challenge in the teaching and learning of Social Studies. In situations where the instructional media are available, they would not be adequate or they would not be sufficient. This paper therefore, aimed to:

- i. identify the instructional media appropriate for the teaching and learning of Social Studies;
- ii. classify the instructional media appropriate for the teaching and learning of Social Studies based on dimensions and projections; and
- iii. explore the values of instructional media to Social Studies teaching and learning.

Conceptual Clarifications

Many scholars have given different definitions of instructional materials. For instance, Anuonye (2008) views instructional materials as “anything used to meet an educational need”. These include buildings, staff, equipment, ideas and materials. He further explains that the hedge around the school field, the town street, the people in the community, the clay that may lie beneath the soil constitute instructional resources. In effect all the world is a resource he added. Anuonye (2008) posits that educational media are those equipment, materials and services which are used in the promotion of educational technology processes and techniques in our teaching and learning process, such as charts, diagrams, maps, models, mockups, slides, films, projectors, television, radio, books and cut-outs from newspapers, magazines and journals and so on. Onwuagboke (2017) defines instructional materials as self-supporting devices which can be used by educators to present a complete body of information in the teaching-learning process. The implication from this definition is that if learners are exposed to diverse instructional media in a conducive learning environment they requires little assistance from the teacher to learn, as the media present a complete body of information. Hence, such instructional media cannot be called “teaching aids” which are currently outdated terminology, as they do not aid teaching. They should therefore be referred to as instructional materials. They should therefore be

referred to as instructional material which is currently the terminology.

Onwuagboke (2015) maintains that educational media refer to all forms of information carriers which are used to clarify concepts. They are materials that can be used to record, store, preserve and transmit or retrieve information. Teachers and learners can refer to and use them as source to obtain knowledge, new ideas, and to acquire new skills and competencies. They are learning resources. A wise and proper use of them makes instruction more vivid and the instructional process easier for the instructor. Anuonye (2008) sees instructional media as various kinds of learning environments that generate stimulation for the learner. Following this argument, instructional media are made up of environmental elements such as devices, people, books and even field trips. The teacher who is at the centre of stimulating the learning environment for the learner is a principal medium in instruction. Buttressing the above view, Onwuagboke (2015) observes that the human voice is a powerful medium because it can provide qualities that get attention, convey information, stimulate response and practice and produce valuable products of learning and behaviour. Thus, media in education embraces all resources whether human, material-graphic, photographic, electronic or mechanized means of capturing, processing, storing and or restructuring visuals or verbal information or a combination of both. In essence, instructional media are information carriers developed expressly to facilitate the attainment of teaching and learning objectives. They are used to clarify difficult and abstract concepts and make the learners/pupils understand the lesson better.

Social Studies is an important subject taught in schools. Mezieobi (2016) pinpointed that the need of Social Studies as a distinct school topic for efficient functioning in all environments and societies, including Nigeria. Social Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study that investigates man's symbiotic relationships with his environments and equips him with the reflective or contemplative capacities, intellectual, affective, social, and work skills necessary to comprehend his world and its problems, and to rationally solve or cope with them in order to live effectively in society (Mezieobi, Fubara

& Mezieobi, 2018). Social Studies can also be characterized as a field that focuses on social change and promotes recipients' meaningful involvement with their physical, social, and cultural contexts (Ezegbe, Eskan, Anyanwu & Abiogu, 2014). Furthermore, Mezieobi (2016) see Social Studies learning activities, as the best suited for living in communities, societies, and relating in organisations for the promotion of civic knowledge, and competence. For its effective implementation some instructional media are required.

Categories of Instructional Media in Social Studies Teaching and Learning

Instructional media are classified by the various sense organs because learning and behavior change are explicit and learning experiences are through the senses. It is said that the sense organs are the gateways of knowledge and a resourceful and effective teacher should as much as possible expose the learners to such learning experiences.

Classifications Based on the Sense Organs

Visual Materials: Refer to those materials which appeal to the sense of seeing only, such as diagrams, charts, graphs, pictures and so on; Audio instructional materials are those that only give sound, thus appealing to learner's sense of hearing. AM and FM radio, all types of tape recordings, Compact Disc (CD) cassettes and teachers' voices are in this category; Audio-Visual Materials appeal to the sense of hearing and seeing at the same time. These are pictures, diagrams, (visuals), which go with sound, or audio-visual synchronized system. (Ajuzie, & Ajuzie, (2014); Tactiles Material are those that appeal to the sense of touch (skin), among which are the rays of the sun, cold and hot substances/materials and Gustatory Materials appeal to the sense of taste (tongue), which could be sweet, sour and bitter substances and so on.

Classification Based on Dimensions

There are both two and three-dimensional objects; it is two

dimensional when the instructional material is flat, has length and width (breadth), such as pictures, graphs, posters, charts and films. While three-dimensional objects; are instructional materials that have length, breadth and height (or thickness), such as books, desks, chairs, models, mock-ups, and so on; Software materials are programmes application and body of content. It includes graphic materials, slides, films, overhead transparencies, motion pictures and so on; and Hardware Materials are machines or boards which are used to present the content of software materials. They are billboards, display screens, tape recorders, projectors, video recorders, video monitors, and interactive boards and so on.

Classification Based on Projection

Projected Media are instructional materials which require projection before its content and can be viewed. Examples are television, computers, e-mail, interactive board, PowerPoint presentation; non-Projected Media are instructional materials that can be viewed without the use of electric power. Examples include pictures, charts, magazines, mock-ups, graphs, chalk/marker boards and so on. Print Materials include books, journals, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets and so on; non-Print Materials include display boards, radio, TV, computer, telephone, and so on; display Boards include, chalkboard, bulletin board, magnetic board, flannel board; and real-objects (Realia) are materials that provides real situations and objects to learners Using realia in teaching and learning Social Studies can be in the form of field trips, camping, excursions, or by bringing in objects/substance that are dangerous into the classroom for learners to see.

Values of Instructional Media to Social Studies Teaching and Learning

First the concept of teaching and learning are briefly defined to aid understanding of the importance of instructional media to them. The National Teachers' Institute (NTI) (2000) sees teaching as an attempt to help people acquire some skills, attitudes, knowledge, ideas and appreciation. Thus, the teacher's task is to create or

influence desirable changes in behaviour in his or her own pupils. NT1 (2000) defines teaching as the guidance of the pupils through planned activities so that the pupils may acquire the richest learning possible from their experiences. Learning occurs when an expert (the teacher) interacts with a novice (the student) with the goal of influencing the latter to change their behaviour in accordance with the instructor's expectations.

The importance of instructional media in the Social Studies teaching-learning processes cannot be over-emphasized and the classroom Social Studies teacher could always exercise his/her professional responsibilities which include among other things being a resourceful and innovative person. As a resourceful Social Studies teacher, the Social Studies teacher can use the resources in the rich environment to implement a variety of instructional experience. As an innovator, he is required to continuously look for interesting things that will challenge and enliven the daily learning experiences of children in order to avoid the drudgery too often associated with the classrooms. Games and field trips have been found to play very exciting role in this regard.

Ajuzie and Akukwe (2018) posit that children of today are growing up in a world of mass media, social media and as a result, a good Social Studies teacher employs such resources as pictures, illustrations, television or radio, where available and many other audio-visual materials in his daily teaching. Anuonye (2008) insists that teachers are to recognize that the days are gone when only the textbooks and the chalkboard were the only way out. The current period is the period of learning by doing. The child's entire senses need to be stimulated for effective education of the entire child. It is said that the sense organs are the gateways to knowledge. One of the major aims of education is of course educate the entire child-head, heart and hand and helping him to make rational decisions as regards his emotional, physical, social, mental, psychological and financial needs.

Furthermore, Anuonye (2008) explains that to hear something is good, to see it is better and to do it is the best of them all. A child who hears remembers 25% of it, one who sees what is going on remembers 50% and the pupil who draws and paints remembers

90% of it all. Supporting the above view, a Chinese proverb observed that, “a look is worth more than a thousand words”. In the same vein, Anuonye (2021) citing Kinder Alcorn and Schunert (1970) stressed that experience tends to show that 10 percent of what people read, 20 percent of what they hear, 30 percent of what they see, 50 percent of what they hear and see, 70 percent of what they say, and 90 percent of what they say while doing a task are often retained.

There is therefore a great need to adopt a multimedia approach to Social Studies learning. In the Social Studies teaching and learning environment, the Social Studies teacher should be aware of the above and therefore select and use a combination of instructional media which enable the Social Studies learners read, hear, see, say something and finally say something as they do a thing. The essence of utilizing media in the instructional process is to enhance Social Studies learning by ensuring the attainment of the instructional objectives. No single medium used during the instructional process will achieve all the objectives of an instructional process hence the Social Studies teacher should strive to use a combination of instructional media that will bring about good result in the attainment of stated instructional objectives. Multimedia approach to instruction is the answer.

Anuonye and Ukegbu (2017) maintain that meaningful learning takes place when the learner is fully involved in the process through the use of well prepared and presented instructional media. This gives the learner the opportunity of experiencing as he observes, hears, touches, or manipulates things, carries out some experiments or interacts with some concrete objects and situations. The application or use of a variety of instructional media which enable the learner to observe, hear, touch or manipulate a thing is what is referred to as multimedia approach to instruction.

Ajuzie and Ifegbo (2021) refer to multimedia learning as the basic strategy underlying the constructive use of a variety of interrelated learning experiences. The multimedia approach to instruction emphasizes the selection, use of appropriate sequences of interrelated audio-visual or instructional learning experiences which reinforce and strengthen one another in achieving the stated instructional objectives thereby enhancing the progress of the

learner. However, Ike, Chimezie and Iwu (2002) warn that if a single medium can do the job satisfactorily, the teacher should avoid the temptation to try something else to avoid information overload and distraction of the learners as a result of the employment of so many media.

The specific values of concrete instructional materials to teaching and learning process (as itemized by Anuonye, 2021; Ajuzie & Akukwe, 2018) are: illustrates and clarifies non-verbal symbols and images, quantitative relationships, complex relationships, abstract concepts, spatial relations and specific details; facilitates development of desirable attitudes and behaviour changes; shows inaccessible processes, materials, events, things and changes in time, speed and space. Promotes greater acquisition and longer retention of factual knowledge. Provides increased and sustained interest in learning; provides objectivity for the study of a delicate or controversial subject; Stimulates interest in voluntary reading. It allows all members of a group the opportunity to share a joint learning experience. It gains and holds attention of learners. It reinforces verbal messages and it brings experts and a variety of resources to the classroom. It provides for a direct interaction of students with the realities of their social and physical environment. It provides integrated experiences that vary from concrete to abstract. They are valuable for all age and ability groups. It saves time by limiting the use of wordy explanations. It offers experiences not easily obtainable in other ways.

Against the backdrop of the values of instructional media in the instructional process, the classroom teacher could exercise his professional responsibilities which include among other things being a very resourceful and innovative person. A resourceful Social Studies teacher could use the resources in the rich environment to implement a variety of instructional experience. As an innovator, it is required for the teacher to continuously look for interesting things that will challenge and enliven the daily learning experiences of children in order to avoid the drudgery too often associated with the classrooms. Games and field trips have been found to play very exciting role in this regard.

Attributes of 21st Century Classroom Social Studies Teaching and Learning Activities

The 21st century Social Studies teaching/learning process anchors mostly on constructivists' theories of learning. Constructivism is essentially a learning theory based on observation and scientific research. It states that individuals develop their own understanding and knowledge of the universe via direct experience and reflection (Anusiem, 2017). This means that when we encounter something new, we have to reconcile it with our previous ideas and experiences, maybe changing what we believe, or discarding the new information as irrelevant. Thus, Social Studies learners are active creators of their own knowledge. To accomplish this, he must inquire, investigate, and evaluate his knowledge. Constructivism emphasizes that learning should be an active process in which students develop new ideas or concepts based on their existing or prior knowledge.

Contrary to the criticisms of certain (conservative/traditional) educators, Anuonye and Ukegbu (2017) argue that Constructivism respects the active role of the instructor/teacher and the value of expert knowledge. Constructivism modifies this role such that teachers guide students in generating knowledge as opposed to regurgitating a list of facts. Therefore, a constructivist teacher/educator delivers problem-solving and inquiry-based learning activities so that students can generate and test ideas, draw conclusions and inferences, and share and express their knowledge in a collaborative learning environment. Constructivism transforms the student into an active participant in the learning process, as opposed to a passive user of information. Actively building their knowledge and understanding as opposed to passively ingesting information from textbooks or teacher, with the teacher's constant guidance.

Some 21st Century Social Studies Teaching and Learning Characteristics

Teaching and learning characteristics of Social Studies in the 21st century allows for the learner to adapt real life learning experiences with impact for the necessary knowledge, skills attitudes

competencies to thrive in life. Social Studies teaching and learning provides for learners to be agent in their own learning with emphasis on competencies, life skills and mindsets reorientation as well as the total person development of the mind, emotions, body and attitude through innovations. The characteristics includes but not limited to the following; Social Studies teaching and learning is based on the 4cs (communication, critical thinking, creativity and collaboration). The process provides guidance, coaching, facilitation, instruction; that supports collaboration and social negotiation among Social Studies learners (that is sharing of ideas among groups of learners); in a real world settings or case-based Social Studies learning environment; hands-on/minds-on experiences; it links theory with practice. It is learner centred as they are active and dominates the learning process (DAVS, 2018).

Some of the 21st Century Social Studies Teaching and Learning Strategies

Social Studies teaching and learning involves the transmission of the relevant body of knowledge, attitude, manner, dispositions, skills that enable the citizen to survive in an ever growing and dynamic world (Egharevba & Iyamu, 2020). When teachers facilitates and learners owns the teaching and learning process, ideas and experiences are collaboratively shared in such a way, that enables learners to apply knowledge, skills, attitudes and integrate values into solving real world problems. In the 21st century, Social Studies seeks to advance learning outcomes in a globalized economy for citizens to be civically competent and socially. Hence, the methods, approach, techniques that reinforces learning through learners active involvement include but not limited to these strategies: Jig-saw, Brainstorming, Card sort, Circle the sage, Concept mapping, Cognitive apprenticeship, Decision tree, Fish bowl, Know-what to learn, Give one get one, Mentoring, Mind mapping, Peer instruction, Picture reading, Play method, Prediction, Reciprocal teaching, Semantic mapping, Scaffolding, Think-pair-share, Venn diagram and modeling.

Anuonye and Ukegbu (2017) note that learning in a

constructivists' environment is seen as resulting from the complex and continuous process of interaction and social negotiation between individual and the external world. Social Studies learning is no exception. This interaction process is life-long, from birth to death. In essence the individual learns through his/her doing and no one else's. He or she has to be an active participant in the instructional process as he/she interacts with the rich Social Studies learning environment. The Social Studies teacher's job is to provide the individual with situations that encourage instrumentation, experimentation, manipulation of symbols and the subsequent results. The learner now must be allowed to do and to progress at his/her own rate as in Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) and programmed instruction (PI). The individual has a real comprehension of something only if he/she invents it himself/herself.

Anuonye (2008) observes that whenever we teach or present material too quickly, we prevent the individual from reinventing it himself. He further remarked that the ultimate goal of formal education is to produce individuals with the creative potential to make significant contributions to society rather than merely repeating the achievements of previous generations. That is, men (or women) who are creative, inventive, innovative and discoverers who have minds which can be critical, can verify and refuse to accept everything supplied. The ensuing scenario of learners can only be products of the 21st century teaching and learning collaborative learning strategies.

Collaborative Learning Strategies in Social Studies

Anuonye and Oruwari (2018) opine that collaborative learning is a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together. In contrast to solo learning, collaborative learning involves the utilization of one another's resources and talents (e.g., asking for information, analyzing one another's ideas, monitoring one another's work, etc.). Specifically, collaborative learning is predicated on the notion that knowledge can be acquired within a population whose individuals actively share their experiences and assume unequal roles. To put it another way,

collaborative learning refers to approaches and situations in which students engage in a shared task in which they are dependent on and accountable to one another.

MacGregor, outlined the following set of assumptions about current perceptions of teaching and learning in a collaborative setting. These include among other things the following: that process of learning is active and pupils integrate information and relate it to a framework of prior knowledge; learning flourishes in a social setting characterized by pleasant discourse between students; learning is an inherently social act, knowledge construction rather than knowledge reproduction; knowledge is dynamic and fluid, teacher does not know it all; learning has moved from D.D.D. (dry, dull, difficult) to E.E.E. (easy, exciting and enjoyable); students learn better when they relate with what is taught and are given the opportunity to touch, negotiate, experience and share ideas; Instead of relying solely on the framework presented by an expert or a textbook; students learn to construct their own experiences in a collaborative setting; students can share and defend their ideas; explore alternative points of view; and test the validity of other students conceptual frameworks.

Conclusion

Instructional media are educational resource materials which are indispensable tools in the hands of resourceful Social Studies teachers. These media include audio, visuals, audio-visuals and the mechanical devices or tools which render such audible or visible in the Social Studies teaching and learning more effective and efficient. Instructional materials serve as mechanical representations of the real thing which maximize learning. They are highly useful and invaluable in the hands of skilful teachers especially where there are no substitutes. The 21st century active Social Studies learning instructional strategies have really made Social Studies learning to be fun and not a struggle. It behoves the Social Studies teachers to allow this paradigm shift to remain and adapt to the new changes, as the teacher no longer owns the classroom but the learner does. The Social Studies learner has the capacity of constructing their

knowledge as long as they are provided with the enabling environment. Such Social Studies learning strategies as jigsaw and venn diagram can be very engaging if used in instructional delivery.

Suggestions

The 21st century classroom Social Studies teachers should understand the indispensability of instructional media in the Social Studies teaching and learning process and therefore use them very effectively. Social Studies learners learn best when they are exposed to a variety of stimuli (multimedia approach to instruction). Social Studies teacher should have the understanding that sense organs are the gateways to knowledge, so the selection of appropriate instructional media should be of paramount importance in our teaching strategies. The 21st century Social Studies learner loves activity-based learning experiences (that is hands-on and minds-on) that are engaging, hence, Social Studies classrooms should be learner-centered and not teacher-centered. Collaborative learning should be encouraged so that Social Studies learners can progressively develop the four Cs (i.e., communication, creativity, critical thinking and collaboration). Social Studies teachers should be encouraged to always use instructional media in the Social Studies teaching and learning processes.

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