



## ENGAGING 21ST CENTURY STUDENTS IN THEIR MEDIUM: SOCIAL MEDIA AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL IN A SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM

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### **Abstract:**

Technology and Social Media websites are now an indispensable part of our lives. It is almost impossible not to look at our accounts on any day. Most of us especially 16 years and above have a profile on one of the social networks and it can be observed that a sizable number are students who use the different websites for different purposes. The focus of this research is on finding out if Social Studies lecturers in the faculty of Education are using Social Media in teaching their students and to identify ways, they are incorporating it. The population of the study is 21 lecturers (5 Social Studies lecturers, four males and one female, all senior lecturers) and 16 non-Social Studies Lecturers who teach Social Studies courses. The method of data collection was questionnaire. The data was analyzed using simple percentages. The results show among other things that the lecturers believed that social media network platforms are important pedagogical tools, many of them are not using them as a teaching and learning tool. The researcher therefore recommended that lecturers and their students should undergo training on ways of using these platforms as a teaching tool.

**Keywords:** social media, social studies lecturers, social studies classroom

### **1. Introduction**

21<sup>st</sup> century pre-service teachers are technologists, they have grown in a fast-moving digital world, and easily overlook traditional lecture-based classes (Boholano, 2017). Social media tools are now universal, and you can see our students use them all the time. The most popular tools are Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, blog, Twitter, Instagram and Snap chart. The improvement in modern technologies attempts to accommodate the

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needs of people, especially the younger generation. As educators, how can we take advantage of this propulsion? The integration of digital technologies into teaching practices provides teachers with new strategies and activities for instruction for these 21st century learners. Prensky (2005) characterizes 21st century learners as having a smooth acquaintance with: new systems for communicating (instant messaging), sharing (blogs), buying and selling (eBay), exchanging (peer-to-peer technology), creating (Flash), meeting (3D worlds), collecting (downloads), coordinating (wikis), evaluating (reputation systems), searching (Google analyzing, reporting (camera phones), programming (modeling), socializing (chat rooms), and even learning (Web surfing).

With these skills, these learners see instruction that incorporates digital technologies meaningful, relevant, and motivational (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Jonassen, Howland, Marra, & Crismond, 2008; Small & Vorgan, 2008).

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Liu (2010) is of the opinion that Web 2.0 technologies are coming out every day even when there are already more than enough applications for people to use. The preservice teachers are presently using these social media technologies for pleasure, communication and education. These applications according to Liu, (2010) were not developed for learning purposes. A good number of people noted by Crook et al (2008) use them for relaxation purposes such as *“gaming, communication, and shaping online spaces for expression of personal identity”*. McCoog (2008) said that 21st century teaching involves a balance of the objectives of the teacher with the needs and input of the students, so to effectively engage and teach the present generation of students, pre service teachers will help our educational system satisfy this requirement.

The school systems must be equipped with essentials of ICT resources, and curricula must be planned so as to promote a collaborative learner-centered environment to which students will be able to picture and respond to. As ICT is being fast integrating into classrooms, preservice teachers must have professional development in applying social media in instruction.

The problem of the study therefore is; are pre service teachers in the University of Port Harcourt reshaped and guided in using social media in teaching and learning? Do they possess the skills of the 21st century teaching and learning which smart social networking provides?

## **3. Purpose of the Study**

This study explores the use of social networking technology by the department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology, Faculty of Education lecturers to enhance teaching and learning. The study will specifically try to find out; if they are using social media in teaching their students; the social media platforms they are familiar with;

the common activities on the platforms and their perceptions of social media as a teaching and learning tool.

### 3.1 Research Questions

The following research Questions guided the study:

- 1) Are lecturers in the department of Curriculum and Educational Technology using social media as part of their teaching tool?
- 2) Which of the social media platforms are they familiar with?
- 3) What are their perceptions of social media as a teaching and learning tool?

## 4. Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used for this study which sought to ascertain, among other things the use of social networking technology by the department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology, Faculty of Education lecturers to enhance teaching and learning. The population of the study consisted of all the lecturers in the department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt with a population forty-five.

A questionnaire titled “Social Media Use by Lecturers for teaching and learning” was used to collect data for the study. It was designed by the researcher. It had two sections, A and B. Section A was designed to cover demographic variables such as: age, sex, educational qualification, marital status and so on, while section B was designed to determine the type of devices they have, the social network platforms they are familiar with, the common activities they carry out and their perception. The researcher validated the questionnaire using face and content validity. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was applied to determine the measure of accurate consistency. This gave a coefficient of 0.78. Information gathered from the field were decoded and tallied, and the frequency counts determined. Percentage scores were computed. Tables were constructed in respect of the demands of the respective research questions. Details of these analyses are presented below.

**RQ 1:** Which of the Social Media platforms are they familiar with?

**Table 1:** Profile of Social Networking Sites Utilized by Lecturers

SN	Which of these are you familiar with:	VF	SF	NF
1	Twitter	21%	32%	47%
2	YouTube	21%	27%	52%
3	LinkedIn	26%	34%	40%
4	Instagram	11%	23%	66%
5	Blog	13%	17%	70%
6	Slide share	7%	13%	80%
7	Facebook	82%	13%	5%
8	WhatsApp	100%	0%	0%
9	Google Drive	7%	12%	81%

The above table shows that all the lecturers in the study are very familiar with WhatsApp, a good number of them are also very familiar with Facebook (82%) but the case is not the same when it comes to other platforms like Instagram, SlideShare, Google Drive and Blog. The table shows that 66% of them are not familiar with Instagram, SlideShare 80%, Blog 67%, and Google Drive 75%.

**RQ 2:** Are lecturers in the department of Curriculum and Educational Technology using Social Media as part of their teaching tool?

**Table 2: Activities of Lecturers on Social Media Platform**

SN	Activities on Social Media Platform	SA	A	SD	D
1	Create conversation with students and colleagues on blogs and Twitter.	10%	12%	53%	25%
2	Find and engage students through posts and comments.	9%	11%	51%	29%
3	Respond to inquiries from students through WhatsApp	47%	23%	11%	19%
4	Watch videos for entertainment.	57%	21%	4%	18%
5	Watch videos for academics.	48%	23%	3%	26%
6	Post personal videos and messages.	61%	28%	3%	8%
7	Post educative links and articles.	23%	27%	22%	28%

The above table shows that the lecturers do not make use of blogs and twitters to communicate and engage students through comments and posts. Only 22% of them tries to create conversation with students through blogs and twitter while 20% of them engage their students through posts and comments. But a good number of them (70%) do respond to their student's inquires through WhatsApp. 78% of the lecturers watch videos for entertainment ,71% watch for academics, 89% post personal videos and messages while 50% of them post educative links and articles.

**RQ 3:** What are their perceptions of Social Media as a teaching and learning tool?

**Table 3: Lecturers perception of social media as a teaching tool**

SN	Perception of Social Media platforms as a teaching and learning tool.	SA	A	SD	D
1	Social Media helps in instant communication and independent learning.	56%	32%	2%	10%
2	Social Media cultivates a culture of critiquing content among students.	55%	40%	2%	3%
3	Social Media like twitter and blogs allows students learn from themselves through posts and comments.	20%	18%	22%	40%
4	Social Media help students to form online groups where they can virtually accomplish their class work.	23%	13%	30%	34%
5	Social Media facilitates active learning.	32%	21%	19%	28%
6	It facilitates collaboration and resource sharing.	21%	32%	27%	20%
7	It enhances discussion between teachers and students.	34%	22%	21%	23%
8	Social Media is an avenue to improve scholarship and learning.	42%	38%	5%	15%

Table 3 indicates that a good number of the lecturers believe that social media platforms can be a good teaching and learning tool. 88% of them believe that it helps in instant communication and independent learning, 95% agreed that it can cultivate a culture of critiquing content among students, while 80% also agreed that it is an avenue to improve scholarship and learning. 62% of the lecturers did not agree that twitter and blogs allow students to learn from each other, 64% also disagrees to the fact that Social Media helps students to virtually accomplish their class work. 53% said it promotes active learning, 53% believes it facilitates collaboration while 53% said it enhances discussion between teachers and students.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The results of the study indicate that lecturers in this department are familiar with very few of the social media platforms. All the lecturers are only very familiar with WhatsApp and a good number of them with Facebook, but for the other platforms like blog, twitter, Instagram, SlideShare, Google Drive, they are either not familiar at all or somehow familiar.

On the activities they carry out on these platforms, it is observed that they do not use it as a teaching and learning tool, the study shows that they usually use them to post and watch private videos and mails but use them scarcely for creating conversations with students or finding and engaging students through posts.

The lecturers in the study perceived social media platforms as a teaching tool that leads to instant communication and independent learning, they agreed that it cultivates a culture of critiquing content among students, they also agreed that it is an avenue to improve scholarship. A good number of them did not believe that twitter and blog give the students opportunity to learn from each other, this is understandable because from the study it can be observed that many of them are not familiar with blog and twitter. But this perception is in contradiction with Williams & Jacobs (2004) who in their study observed that professionals utilized blogs in posting assignments and other instructional materials for learning. They also found out that eighty percent of the pre-service teachers under study used blogs in teaching and learning. They are of the opinion that 'Blogs' have evolved along similar lines to other forms of human communication because they are a product of convenience rather than design (Williams & Jacobs, 2004).

Duffy & Bruns, (2006) went further to say that the growing popularity of blogs shows that it is possible what students' study, read and to be able to respond to issues critically might be accomplished under circumstances totally different from those currently being used in our higher education.

In summary it is observable from the study that majority of the lecturers acknowledged social media platform as a teaching tool.

The Internet provides numerous avenues for lecturers to share their views, preferences, lessons or experiences with others as well as opportunities to teach and learn. Social networking sites provide easy-to-use tools for all users to invite others to

join the network. The above tabulated data gathered from the lecturers in the department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology, University of Port Harcourt shows that majority of the lecturers acknowledged social media platform as a teaching tool.

Understanding an individual's technological environment is now a vital clue in understanding how that person uses the internet, connects with others and accesses information (Lenhart et al., 2010). We all know that 21<sup>st</sup> century students are quite different from 20<sup>th</sup> century or other centuries. The capabilities people need to work, self-actualization and even citizenship is quite different. Social network platforms are very popular to the 21<sup>st</sup> century student so their trainers (lecturers) must use their medium to reach them.

Social media is quickly turning into one of the most popular channels for all. In addition to collaborating face-to-face with colleagues in conferences, seminars and workshops, 21st century workers are more and more succeeding in tasks through mediated interplay with associates halfway across the world whom they may never meet face-to-face. Selber (2004) cited in Vie (2008) shows that students need instruction that will help them gain an awareness of technological literacy practices as well as help them become expert at researching and using technological tools.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendation**

Technology in the 21st century presents an extraordinary tool to build and improve the learning environment. Digital literacy skills are certainly essential to ensure the technology is used to complement and not to substitute for high-quality instructional methods. The most powerful tool in teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is when preservice teachers with valuable skills use digital technology.

Human beings are highly variable and constantly subject to change, so the curriculum ought to match the dynamic shifts and add education on new and social media. My argument here is that social media should both be used in the classroom as a pedagogical tool. Educating preservice students with new media holds potential to enable the next generation of professionals to navigate their teaching career and the various facets of this field. By encouraging learning through live, interactive, and changing technologies, learners will be challenged to think in real-time in a complex and dynamic environment; a skill that is necessary as a professional teacher. The use of social media for creative learning opportunities can yield a tangible learning outcome, and value training for both educators and learners

Despite evidence about the benefits accrued from the application of social media in higher education, there are some basic contradictions that remain obstacles to smooth adoption of these technologies. Conole ([2010](#)) disclosed a number of such issues to include privacy where it is reported that there is lack of understanding of the implications of adopting more open approaches in technological environments, lack of incentives for instructors using these technologies in class, lack of skills to use these technologies and a perception that these technologies might not work in the classroom.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that these lecturers and their pre-service teachers should undergo training on proper use of social media and other ICT tools in the 21st century. Furthermore, I encourage other researchers to elevate the research in this area by sharing knowledge and experience. Social media in graduate education is of enormous value to current and future learners.

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