

INTEGRATING SOCIAL NETWORKS USED BY STUDENTS INTO INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA: KEY TO IMPROVED CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, the effective implementation of curriculum in teacher education programmes is paramount for preparing educators to meet the diverse needs of students and to foster their intellectual growth. Integral to this pursuit is the recognition that education must adapt to the changing ways in which students engage with technology and social networks. As digital natives, today's students are immersed in a connected world, with social networks serving as central platforms for communication, information sharing, and collaboration. It is based on the above that this survey study assessed teacher educators' perceptions on integrating the social networks used by student teachers into instructional media to improved curriculum implementation in teacher education curriculum. Two researched questions were posed and a hypothesis postulated to guide the study. All the 183 lecturers in School of Education Michael Okpara University of agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU) and 203 lecturers from school of education Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri. The instrument for data collection was appraisal questionnaire titled "Teachers-educator Perception on integrating the social networks used by student teachers into instructional media for improved curriculum implementation with a reliability coefficient of 0.84. Data was analysed using mean, standard deviation and independent t-test. The findings showed that MOUUAU and AIFCE lectures have positive perception as regarding integrating the social networks used by student teachers into instructional media for improved curriculum implementation and they do not differ significantly in this view. Recommendations were made based on the result of the finding which include among others that relevant authorities in teacher education institutions should offer comprehensive professional development opportunities for educators as this can address resistance to change and enhance their ability to effectively integrate social networks into instructional media.

Key-words: Social media networks, integration, instructional media, curriculum implementation, teacher education

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, the effective implementation of curriculum in teacher education programmes is paramount for preparing educators to meet the diverse needs of students and to foster their intellectual growth (Dede, 2018). Integral to this pursuit is the recognition that education must adapt to the changing ways in which students engage with technology and social networks. Social media has swiftly emerged as the most rapidly expanding web application in the 21st century, facilitated by the widespread availability of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, 2go, Wikis, Skype, WhatsApp, among many others. This phenomenon has been made possible through the internet, information and communication technology (ICT), and the proliferation of smart-phones. Social media networks serve multifaceted purposes, acting as avenues for connecting people, fostering friendships, enabling social interactions, and serving as rich sources of information and data for academic pursuits (Green & Lewin, 2016; Bull & Adams, 2012). In the context of Nigeria, a variety of social media platforms such as Facebook, Skype, Twitter, MySpace, WhatsApp, 2go, and SMS are readily accessible. The activities conducted on these platforms range from socializing and information gathering to discussions on assignments and projects, debates, chats, collaborative efforts, and networking.

As digital natives, today's students are immersed in a connected world, with social networks serving as central platforms for communication, information sharing, and collaboration. This societal shift has important imperative for educators and teacher education programmes. This calls for integration of these media into the curriculum. The integration of social networks into instructional media refers to the deliberate inclusion of social media platforms and their associated tools into the teaching and learning process (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones (2009). It recognizes that by doing so, educators can leverage the familiarity and ubiquity of social networks to create engaging and effective educational experiences.

Traditionally, teacher education programmes have primarily relied on conventional instructional methods, often lagging behind in the adoption of digital tools and platforms. However, this approach risks creating a disconnect between the teacher education curriculum and the lived experiences of students, who are accustomed to accessing information, engaging in discussions, and collaborating through various social networks. This divide between traditional pedagogical approaches and students' digital behaviors necessitates a fundamental shift in teacher education. Numerous studies have highlighted the benefits of integrating technology and digital resources into education, including increased student engagement, personalized learning experiences, and improved learning outcomes (Dede, 2018; Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009). These revelations underscore the potential of integrating social networks into instructional media, allowing teacher education programmes to bridge the digital divide and better prepare educators for the modern classroom.

The pervasive use of social networks among students is a defining characteristic of the digital age (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Social networks, including platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram,

and more recently, TikTok, are central to the way students communicate, share information, and collaborate in their personal and academic lives. This ubiquity of social networks is driven by several factors. Social networks provide a platform for students to connect with peers, share experiences, and engage in conversations. These interactions often extend beyond socializing to include discussions related to coursework (Junco, 2011). Students use social networks to share resources, study tips, and academic content. This informal sharing of educational materials can significantly impact how students learn and support each other (Veletsianos, 2010). Social media, when harnessed effectively, can be a valuable tool for educational activities (Freeman, 2016). Bright (2014) emphasizes that social networks serve as resourceful centers for teaching the English language, suggesting their potential for enhancing language education. Akinjobi (2013) advocates for exploring social network sites as complementary tools to traditional classroom activities. Furthermore, Yunus and Salehi (2012) point out that Facebook pages can enhance students' proficiency in using the English language. Approached in the right manner, social media platforms have the potential to significantly contribute to educational objectives. Fatimayin (2015) takes this idea a step further by asserting that social media can seamlessly integrate both social and educational aspects. It can serve the dual purpose of assisting teaching and learning processes while also acting as a means for social interaction. In essence, social media platforms have the capability to bridge the gap between formal education and informal socialization, creating a holistic learning environment that encompasses both educational and social growth. The flexibility and accessibility of social media platforms make them powerful tools that, when utilized effectively, can revolutionize the way we learn and interact in the digital age. Collaborative projects and group assignments are increasingly conducted through social networks. Students find it convenient to collaborate on documents, communicate in real-time, and coordinate tasks through these platforms (Greenhow & Askari, 2017). Incorporating the pervasive use of social networks into instructional media can harness these existing behaviors for educational purposes, creating opportunities for innovative curriculum implementation in teacher education.

Curriculum implementation in teacher education holds paramount importance in shaping the quality of future educators. It is the process through which teacher education programs translate their educational objectives and content into actual learning experiences for aspiring teachers. As Shulman (1987) argued, "How we teach is at least as important as what we teach." Therefore, the successful implementation of a well-designed curriculum ensures that future teachers not only acquire subject knowledge but also develop the pedagogical skills necessary to effectively engage students and foster their intellectual growth. The significance of curriculum implementation in teacher education can be seen through several key aspects. A well-implemented curriculum ensures that teacher education programmes align with their overarching goals, which may include preparing educators to meet the diverse needs of students, promoting inclusive education, and fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Effective curriculum implementation is critical for maintaining the quality and relevance of teacher education programs. It helps programs adapt to changing educational contexts, emerging pedagogical theories, and technological advancements (Cochran-Smith, Piazza & Power, 2008).

The ultimate goal of teacher education is to enhance student learning in Upper Basic classrooms. Curriculum implementation directly affects aspiring teachers' abilities to facilitate meaningful learning experiences for their future students (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2010). It is on this premise that the researchers investigate teacher educators' perception on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media as key to improved curriculum implantation in teacher education curriculum

Instructional media plays a pivotal role in modern education by transforming the way information is delivered and facilitating interactive and engaging learning experiences (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). In contemporary educational settings, instructional media encompasses a wide array of digital tools, multimedia resources, and technology platforms that educators can leverage to enhance teaching and learning. The role of instructional media in modern education is multi-faceted. Instructional media provides opportunities for immersive and interactive learning, allowing students to explore concepts through various multimedia formats, simulations, and virtual environments (Clark & Mayer, 2016). Digital media can be tailored to meet the diverse needs of individual learners. Adaptive learning systems, for example, use data analytics to customize content and pace according to students' progress (Siemens & Gasevic, 2012). Instructional media expands access to a wealth of educational resources, breaking down geographical and resource barriers. Students and educators can access high-quality content and expertise from around the world (Bates, 2015). The integration of social media used by students into teacher education instructional media will go a long way to capture and sustain the interest of students in the instructional contents and also encourage them to collaborates among themselves for better understanding of the instructional contents

The need to harness social networks for educational purposes is becoming increasingly evident for several reasons. Social networks are designed to capture and maintain users' attention. By integrating these platforms into instructional media, educators can tap into the motivational aspect of social networking to engage students more effectively (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003). Social networks facilitate collaboration and peer-to-peer learning. They offer a space where students can work together, share resources, and provide mutual support, which aligns with modern pedagogical principles (Kop, 2011). Social networks mirror the ways people interact and communicate in the digital age. Utilizing them for educational purposes allows students to develop digital literacy and communication skills that are highly relevant in the 21st century (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). It is on these note that the researchers investigates' teacher educators perception on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media for improved curriculum implementation in teacher education in Nigeria.

Since the advent of social networking platforms, scholars such as Selwyn (2007), Yang (2009), Schwartz (2009), and Roblyer (2011) have delved into the utilization of these networks in educational contexts. Their studies have consistently affirmed that internet-based social networks enhance critical thinking, research-oriented group learning, and collaborative problem-solving. Balakrishen (2017) specifically investigated the impact of social media on learning and

discovered that its incorporation fosters experiential learning, active participation, and effective communication among students. Furthermore, Greenhow and Robelia (2019) noted that integrating social media into teaching and learning environments can lead to innovative forms of inquiry, communication, collaboration, identity construction, and positive cognitive, social, and emotional outcomes. Mazman and Usluel (2010) advocated for learning through platforms like Facebook, emphasizing their potential for interaction, cooperation, and resource sharing. Ahmad and Ahmad (2019) asserted that social networking sites promote active participation and critical thinking among users. In a study exploring the relationship between social networks, knowledge sharing, and student learning, Eid and Al-Jabri (2016) found a positive correlation between online conversations, file exchange, knowledge sharing, entertainment, and enjoyable learning experiences for students.

A noteworthy study by Vrieling and Matzat (2015) established a direct link between the use of social media networking platforms and self-regulated learning. Their research demonstrated that teachers utilized social media to disseminate information within and outside classrooms, without adversely affecting teacher-student relationships. Additionally, Miller's (2009) research on the development of 21st-century skills through personal learning networks revealed enhanced learning interactions, participatory learning, research skills, and effective utilization of social networking tools for general communication. However, despite this extensive research, none of these studies explored the perspectives of teacher educators regarding the integration of social media used by students in instructional media and its potential to enhance curriculum implementation. This gap in knowledge compelled the researchers to undertake the present study, aiming to bridge this gap and contribute valuable insights to the field.

The main purpose of this study is to determine the perception of teacher educators on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media. In specific term, the study sought to:

1. examine teacher educators' perception of integrating social networks used by students into instructional media.
2. investigate the influence of School type on teacher educators' perception of integrating social networks used by students into instructional media.

Research questions

The following research questions were posed to guide this study

1. What is teacher educators' perception of integrating social networks used by students into instructional media?
2. To what extent does school type influence teacher educators' perception of integrating social networks used by students into instructional media?

Hypothesis

School type does not significantly influence teacher educators' perception of integrating social networks used by students into instructional media?

Methods

A survey design was used for the study. This design sought information from respondents as the situation exists without manipulating any variables. The study was carried out in School of Education, Micheal Okpara University of Agriculture (MOUAAU) and the population consist of 183 academic staff and Alvan Ikoku Collage of Education Owerri (AIFCE) and the population of the study consisted of 507 academic staff. The entire academic staff of School of Education MOUAAU was used as sample because the population is small while the purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting the second sample, in which the researchers used 203 academic staff in school of education AIFCE. Instrument for data collection was Teacher educators' Perception questionnaire on 'Integrating Social-networks Used by Students into Instructional Media for Improved Curriculum implementation questionnaire (ISUSIMCI)'. The instrument has part 1 and 2. Part one sought for demographic information of respondent while part two was made up of A and B which sought information on integrating Social-networks Used by Students into Instructional Media for Improved Curriculum implementation questionnaire. A four point rating scale of strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), strongly disagree (SD) and Disagree (D) were used. The instrument was face validated by four experts in the Department of Educational Technology and Measurement and Evaluation, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike and Alvan Ikoku College of Education. Their contributions gave rise to the final instrument used for the study. The instrument was subjected to reliability through test-retest method using thirty six lecturers outside the study population. A reliability coefficient of 0.84 was realized when data generated were subjected to Cronbach alpha. The instrument was administered to the respondents with the help of two research assistants which ensured 100% return. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The decision rule was that any mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted otherwise it was rejected. The t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Figure 1

Teacher educators' perception on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media.

ITEM STATEMENT		LECTURERS		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Social networks enhance students' engagement and participation in the learning process.	3.52	0.51	Accept
2	Integrating social networks into instructional media improves students' critical thinking skills.	3.43	0.48	Accept
3	Social networks help bridge the gap between traditional education methods and students' digital behaviors	3.66	0.61	Accept
4	Using social networks in instructional media fosters collaborative learning among students.	3.44	0.29	Accept
5	Social networks provide a platform for interactive and multimedia rich learning experiences	3.40	0.56	Accept
6	Integrating social networks into teaching materials enhances students' motivation to learn	3.08	0.41	Accept
7	1. Social networks, when harnessed effectively, can significantly contribute to educational objectives and student engagement.	3.52	0.43	Accept
8	Integrating social networks into instructional media aligns with modern pedagogical principles.	3.56	0.59	Accept
9	2. Teacher educators need training to effectively integrate social networks into their teaching materials.	3.51	0.56	Accept
10	The use of social networks in instructional media promotes inclusive education	2.86	0.52	Accept
11	Social networks support the development of digital literacy skills among students	3.51	0.59	Accept
12	3. Teacher educators' perception of social networks' integration is influenced by the accessibility of technology in their institutions.	3.51	0.49	Accept
13	Integrating social networks into instructional media enhances teacher educators' effectiveness in delivering content	3.20	0.45	Accept
14	4. The integration of social networks into instructional media should be a priority for improving teacher education programs.	3.47	0.56	Accept
15	The use of social networks in instructional media supports personalized learning experiences	3.64	0.57	Accept
Cluster mean		3.33	0.51	

Table 1, shows that all the items in the questionnaire has mean average greater than the mean cut off point of 2.5. This shows that teacher educators' were of positive perception on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media

Table 2: influence of School type on teacher educators' perception on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media

	ITEM STATEMENT	MOUAU LECTURERS			AIFCE LECTURERS		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1	Social networks enhance students' engagement and participation in the learning process.	3.31	0.53	Accept	3.33	0.58	Accept
2	Integrating social networks into instructional media improves students' critical thinking skills.	3.41	0.49	Accept	3.39	0.50	Accept
3	Social networks help bridge the gap between traditional education methods and students' digital behaviors	3.26	0.43	Accept	3.21	0.48	Accept
4	Using social networks in instructional media fosters collaborative learning among students.	3.53	0.51	Accept	3.70	0.61	Accept
5	Social networks provide a platform for interactive and multimedia -rich learning experiences	3.24	0.57	Accept	3.32	0.51	Accept
6	Integrating social networks into teaching materials enhances students' motivation to learn	3.20	0.30	Accept	3.42	0.52	Accept
7	Social networks, when harnessed effectively, can significantly contribute to educational objectives and student engagement.	3.15	0.187	Accept	3.42	0.26	Accept
8	Integrating social networks into instructional media aligns with modern pedagogical principles	3.38	0.63	Accept	3.32	0.251	Accept
9	Teacher educators need training to effectively integrate social networks into their teaching materials	3.01	0.34	Accept	3.05	0.21	Accept
10	The use of social networks in instructional media promotes inclusive education	3.49	0.51	Accept	3.50	0.27	Accept
11	Social networks support the development of digital literacy skills among students	3.25	0.22	Accept	3.32	0.31	Accept

12	Teacher educators' perception of social networks' integration is influenced by the accessibility of technology in their institutions	3.37	0.56	Accept	3.35	0.54	Accept
13	Integrating social networks into instructional media enhances teacher educators' effectiveness in delivering content	3.05	0.31	Accept	3.07	0.36	Accept
14 1.	The integration of social networks into instructional media should be a priority for improving teacher education programs.	3.48	0.59	Accept	3.31	0.53	Accept
15 2.	The integration of social networks into instructional media should be a priority for improving teacher education programs.	3.52	0.48		3.57	0.43	Accept
Cluster mean		3.39	0.46		3.45	0.501	
Average mean response		3.43					

Table 2 Shows that all the items on the questionnaire was accepted both by the lecturers in MOUAU and lecturers in AIFCE as they had response mean greater than the instrument scale mean (2.50).Also, the average mean of (3.161) is greater than the scale mean. This implies a positive perception of MOUAU lecturers and AIFCE lecturers that on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media as a key to improved curriculum implementation

Table 3: T -test analysis of MOUAU and AIFCE lecturers on influence of School type on teacher educators' perception on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media.

N	#	SD	DF	t-cal	p. value	Decision
MOUAU: 183	3.39	0.46	384	1.71	0.382	Accepted
AIFCE:203	3.45	0.501				

The data above on Table 3 indicated that t-calculated value is 1.71 at 384 degree of freedom and a p.value of 0.382 is less than 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance which indicated that the null hypothesis was retained. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of MOUAU and AIFCE lecturers on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media to improved curriculum implementation.

Table 3: T -test analysis of mean responses of MOUAU lectures and AIFCE lecturers on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media as a key to improved curriculum implementation.

N	$\bar{x}$	SD	DF	t-cal	p. value	Decision
MOUAU: 183	3.39	0.46	384	1.71	0.382	Accepted
AIFCE:203	3.45	0.501				

The data above on Table 3 indicated that t-calculated value is 1.71 at 384 degree of freedom and a p.value of 0.382 which is greater than 0.05 at 0.05 level of significance indicate that we retain the null hypothesis. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of MOUAU lecturers and AIFCE lecturers on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media as a key to improved curriculum implementation.

Discussion of findings

The first research question establish the perception of the teacher educators' on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media as a key to improved curriculum implementation. Table 1 revealed that all the items on the questionnaire were accepted as they had response mean greater than the instrument scale. This implies that teacher educators have a positive perception towards integrating social networks used by students into instructional media as a key to improved curriculum implementation. This was expected as integrating social media in learning and teaching environments may yield new forms of inquiry, communication, collaboration, positive cognitive, social, and emotional impacts. Additionally, they assist in preparing a generation of teachers and learners who have skills in dealing with modern technologies and their subsequent developments as well as helping to share these skills with the wider community, which enhances equal education contents and opportunities. This will encourage students to actively engage in the learning because their preferred virtual social media is integrated in the classroom teaching and learning delivery. This is in agreement with Selwyn (2007), Yang (2009), Schwartz (2009), and Roblyer (2011) who affirmed that internet-based social networks enhance critical thinking, research-oriented group learning, and collaborative problem-solving. It also supports Balakrishen (2017) that highlighted that social media on learning fosters experiential learning, active participation, and effective communication among students.

The result in table two shows that both MOUAU lecturers and AIFCE lecturers have a positive perception on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media as a key to

improved curriculum implementation. This is because both MOUAAU and AIFCE lecturers understand the essence of social media in this contemporary period and its significant on the lives of youths. This is in line with Clark & Mayer, 2016 and Siemens & Gasevic, 2012, that digital media can be positively tailored to meet the diverse needs of individual learners. The result in table 3, indicate that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of MOUAAU lecturers and AIFCE lecturers on integrating social networks used by students into instructional media. This is based on the fact that both school lectures are aware of social media potential in effectively enhancing learning outcomes

Conclusion

The study explored teacher educators' perceptions regarding the integration of social networks used by students into instructional media as a key strategy for improved curriculum implementation in teacher education in Nigeria. The findings indicated that both lecturers from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture (MOUAAU) and Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education (AIFCE) had positive perceptions about integrating social networks into instructional media. This suggests recognition among educators of the potential benefits of leveraging social media platforms to enhance the teaching and learning experience.

Recommendations

- Relevant authorities in teacher education programmes should provide professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their digital literacy skills and explore innovative ways to integrate social networks into instructional media effectively.
- Teacher education curricula should be reviewed to incorporate modules or courses that focus on technology integration, emphasizing the use of social networks. This will prepare future educators to harness the educational potential of these platforms.
- Educational institutions should create collaborative platforms where educators can share best practices and innovative methods for integrating social networks into teaching materials. Peer-to-peer learning and collaboration can foster creativity and effectiveness.
- Continuous research and evaluation should be conducted to assess the impact of integrating social networks into instructional media on student engagement, learning outcomes, and overall curriculum effectiveness. This ongoing evaluation will help refine strategies and identify best practices.
- Educational institutions and policymakers should collaborate to develop guidelines and policies that support the safe and responsible use of social networks in educational settings. Clear policies can provide a framework for educators, students, and administrators, ensuring a positive and secure online learning environment.

By implementing these recommendations, teacher education programs can bridge the gap between traditional pedagogical approaches and students' digital behaviors. This integration can lead to more engaging, personalized, and effective learning experiences for aspiring teachers, ultimately benefiting the students they will educate in the future.

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