

Research Article

Exploring the Use of Instructional Materials in Social Studies: Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract

Instructional materials are utilized by teachers during the discussion process to enhance and facilitate learning. This study aims to explore the different instructional materials utilized by teachers particularly in the social studies subjects. This study uses a qualitative approach, focusing on participant observation where the third year students taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education, Major in Social Studies serve as participants. The primary data gathering tool is questionnaires targeting the commonly used instructional materials and its benefits and challenges. Thematic analysis is integrated to identify the core concepts and themes of the study. Findings show that textbooks, presentation soft wares, video lectures, electronic modules (e-module), and whiteboards and markers are the commonly used instructional materials in teaching social studies subjects. Its benefits include accessibility, promotes self-paced learning, helps teachers capture the attention and interest of students, and improve students' academic performance. The challenges it poses includes, loss of time for the discussion, technical difficulties, and slow internet connection. Despite these challenges, these instructional materials are beneficial as these effectively engage learners and help them learn the subject matter effectively.

Keywords: Instructional Materials, Social Studies, Textbook, Presentation Software, Electronic Modules, Whiteboards and Markers.

Introduction

Instructional materials are the types of equipment and resources such as textbooks, laboratory apparatus, multimedia resources, and teaching aids utilized by teachers during the teaching process to enhance and facilitate learning. It aids in presenting a topic aligned with the lesson's learning objectives and the educator's teaching strategy. According to Awoyale *et al.*, (2024), instructional materials are teaching aids that help to facilitate the delivery of instruction connected with the teacher, subject content, and learners. Furthermore, Evermeld and Andala (2023) highlighted that instructional materials influence academic performance, and promote engagement of the students. For instance, Kenna and Pellegrino (2018) articulated that diverse instructional materials such as primary and secondary resources, visual materials, political cartoons, music, and learning management systems enhance accessibility and relevance, fostering active participation and historical thinking of the students.

The history of instructional materials has evolved significantly since the early 20th century, with major developments occurring during World War II and the digital age (An, 2021). These materials, encompassing both human and non-human resources, play a crucial role in enhancing teaching and learning outcomes across various subjects, including social studies (Yadav, 2023). While traditional materials like textbooks and blackboards remain prevalent and valued for their structured approach, there's a growing recognition of the potential of digital tools and modern instructional methods (Jibililu, 2024). Research indicates that the appropriate use of instructional materials can significantly improve student engagement, understanding, and academic performance (Didace and Andala, 2021). Instructional materials are important in teaching as it serves to enrich educators on how they will effectively educate students. It has the ability to assist teachers

in explaining ideas and information clearly which can help students to understand the lessons well (Tuimir and Chemwei, 2015). Tuimir and Chemwei (2015) further say that it has the potential to bring life and energy to the teaching-learning process by stimulating students to pay attention to the lesson. Instructional materials are powerful tools that boost educators in teaching and learning. It is important in all levels of education and the absence or inadequacy of these materials may result in the subject being uninteresting (Tety, 2016).

Instructional materials play a crucial role in enhancing the teaching and learning of social studies. These resources, which range from contemporary digital tools to traditional textbooks and maps, have a big impact on students' academic performance, understanding, and engagement (Yadav, 2023; Jibililu, 2024). According to studies, students taught using instructional materials outperform those who do not (Olayinka, 2016). Students find the material accessible and engaging because of these resources, which offer concrete learning experiences (Olokooba, 2021). Nonetheless, teachers must be properly trained and supported in order to use educational materials effectively (Jibililu, 2024). There is a need to include modern digital resources in social studies teaching, while traditional resources are still widely used and valued (Jibililu, 2024). It is recommended that governments and educational institutions make sure that instructional materials are available and that teachers use them effectively in order to maximize their benefits (Olayinka, 2016; Olokooba, 2021).

This research explores on the different instructional materials utilized by teachers at the tertiary level, specifically in the teaching of social studies subjects. The results of this study will be used as evidence to boost the teaching skills of the teachers and learning process of the students.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study are beneficial to students, teachers, pre-service teachers, and future researchers in the following way:

Students

This study provides benefits to students by understanding the different instructional materials used in class. This will help them identify instructional materials that can improve their learning.

Teachers

Through this study, the teachers will have insights about what the students think or feel towards the use of instructional materials in class. This will give them ideas on what to maintain or improve in while using these instructional materials.

Pre-Service Teachers

This study will be beneficial for pre-service teachers to prepare themselves in their practicum phase. This will highlight the different instructional materials that they can utilize to make their discussions more engaging and lively.

Future Researchers

Through this study, researchers can obtain knowledge and ideas for their future research papers that are related to the different instructional materials used in the social studies subject.

Scope and Delimitations

This study focuses on the different instructional materials that social studies teachers utilize in their subject. The study was conducted through the observations of the researchers who also serve as the participants. They are currently third year students taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education, Major in Social Studies students and they have immersed themselves in the lessons from their second year of college until the present-day context. Other programs and courses are not part of the scope of the study.

Method

This study utilized a qualitative research method focusing on participant observations design. For anthropologists and social scientists, participant observation is a method in which researchers take part in the daily activities and interactions of a group of people as a means of learning about their life routines and culture (Musante and DeWalt, 2011). Due to its nature, the researchers were able to articulate their experiences and observations regarding the use of instructional materials by their social studies teachers from their 2nd year in the university up to the present time.

Participant Sample

This study utilized the responses of the current third year students taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education, Major in Social Studies. The study employed purposive sampling where it is centered on the participants' observation and experiences. It is a non-randomized sampling method where researchers choose participants based on the relevance of their experiences that would benefit the objectives and aims of the study (Bisht, 2024). The researchers were also a part of the identified respondents.

Data Generation

The primary data gathering tool are questionnaires. It is a type of tool that consists of a set of questions or other types of prompts that aims to collect information from a respondent (Bhat, 2023). The respondents answered these questions to articulate their observations regarding the different instructional materials used by their social studies teachers from their 2nd year in the university up to the present time.

The following open-ended guide questions were utilized to obtain data for the observation:

- 1) What are the commonly used instructional materials utilized by your social studies teacher?
- 2) What are the benefits of these instructional materials to you as students?
- 3) What challenges have you encountered in the use of these instructional materials?

Data Analysis

The study utilized thematic analysis strategy to look and examine the data gathered from the researchers who served as participants. Thematic analysis is a form of qualitative analysis where it identifies the core ideas, concepts, and patterns from the answers of the participants (Sovacool *et al.*, 2023). By identifying and analyzing themes and patterns, thematic analysis will generate new insights and understanding of the topic (Boyatzis, 1998; Elliot, 2018; Thomas, 2006 as cited in Naeem *et al.*, 2023). This study analyzed the different instructional materials used in teaching social studies subjects.

Results

This study explores the different instructional materials that students observed their teachers utilizing in the different major subjects in social studies. The researchers have looked toward the common instructional materials used, the benefits of these instructional materials to students when teachers use these materials, and the challenges the students encounter with these instructional materials. The researchers shared their observations and experiences throughout their university life specifically targeting social studies related subjects which are found in the second and third year curricula.

Based on the observations of the researchers, the commonly used instructional materials that teachers have used in the social studies subjects includes textbooks, presentation software, video lectures, electronic modules (e-modules), whiteboard and marker.

Textbook

A textbook is an academic book used in educational institutions to support teachers and students in a lesson. It provides informational content and some assessments related to the subject matter. According to Pasaribu *et al.*, (2021), a textbook serves as a reference tool and a learning resource for teachers and students in the educational process that dispenses content and activities sequentially, facilitating students' engagement and understanding of the subject, especially assignments. A textbook is prominently used in schools as an instructional material due to its organized content structure, supporting material for teachers, and student learning facilitator. Reading textbooks interconnects new ideas with an individual's existing prior knowledge as it offers a thorough description of concepts and detailed explanations. Utilizing textbooks in social science as instructional materials can promote the essence of nationalism, global and cultural awareness, and critical thinking. Sharma and Pageni (2024) stated that textbooks are essential instructional materials as they provide global themes or topics such as multiculturalism, environmental sustainability, and issues globally and locally.

Based on the observation of the participants, the textbooks are utilized by two major subjects, the Foundations of Social Studies and Macroeconomics. For the Foundations of Social Studies, the participants utilized textbooks as the primary instructional source or reference for their demonstration teaching as requested by their facilitator. They utilized it as the primary basis of their content and a guide to construct an organized structure of their assigned topic. According to Musilekwa and Mulenga (2019), textbooks are significant materials in social studies as they provide structured content and support in delivering lessons, serving as essential resources for learning and teaching processes. For Macroeconomics, the participants

said that they used textbooks as suggested by their professor that before the discussion proper, they should scan and read it so that the teacher's task is to provide a quick overview of the lesson while answering student's clarifications, and preparation for summative assessments. Moundy *et al.*, (2022) highlighted that textbooks provide necessary content that students must understand before attending class, facilitating deeper engagement during discussions and in-class activities.

Until now, textbooks are still essential in teaching students as they provide an organized sequence of content, different perceptions by different authors, real-world scenarios, and diverse inquiry-based and problem-based activities that promote critical thinking, informed citizens, class engagement, and problem-solving skills that are necessary in the 21st century. Social studies textbooks encourage analytical thinking by presenting diverse perspectives on historical and contemporary issues, prompting students to engage in debates and discussions (Zevin, 2023).

Furthermore, Basik and Kupalov (2024) emphasized that textbooks often include normative texts that require students to identify primary ideas, pieces of evidence, and arguments. Students learn to evaluate the accuracy and reliability of information, identify facts from opinions, and recognize logical errors and rhetorical techniques by examining these texts.

Presentation Software

A presentation software is an online tool where individuals can create visual representations of what they want to share. It provides graphics such as pictures, charts, and other visual elements which can support presenters to impart knowledge more effectively (Awati, 2023).

Presentation software is commonly used in teaching, especially now in the twenty-first century where technology is integrated in the teaching-learning process. Watson (2022) supports this claim as classrooms in the present time utilizes technological tools such as projectors and televisions which teachers can use to share their presentations. Presentation software such as Microsoft PowerPoint can provide teachers with the ability to integrate visuals which are normally difficult using traditional means of presentation (Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2020). Through the use of presentation software, teachers can share the content of the lesson which significantly improves discussion.

Based on the observation, all teachers in social studies are using PowerPoint to present the content of their lesson. During the second year, teachers have used projectors to present their presentations created using presentation software. Since the university placed televisions inside the classrooms, teachers have now and are still currently utilizing these for the discussion. Due to the nature of social studies being a content-based subject where information is abundant, presentation software is used to present information in a more structured and easy way for students to understand. They incorporated images in their presentations in order to capture the attention of students and provide a clear picture of information they are discussing.

Video Lecture

Video lecture is a digital resource that delivers educational content through recorded or live video. It is used for those who are unable to attend in-person meetings or for those students that have difficulty catching up in class. According to Guo *et al.*, (2014), video lectures are audio-visual media provided in a structured form within the framework of the online learning mode to augment student engagement and understanding. Video lectures are utilized in education because students could interact with teachers in real time and were no longer limited to a physical place because they could access educational content remotely and/or in a pre-recorded version. Video lectures enhance student engagement and comprehension by incorporating visual and auditory elements, making them effective for online education (Guo *et al.*, 2014). Subsequently, the semiconductor industry enabled more efficient classroom activities that would otherwise take a lot of resources, giving teachers and students more time to work toward more complex and significant learning objectives.

Video lectures are commonly used in education, especially in online and blended learning environments. It enhances students' learning engagement by integrating multimedia that caters a wide range of learning styles. With the increasing reliance of technology, many institutions used video lectures to support the traditional teaching method by providing additional learning resources.

Based on observations, video lectures provide an alternative perspective on various topics. In Google Classroom, teachers upload their recorded lectures, allowing students to access the materials and revisit

concepts for better understanding. Video lectures are often integrated into classroom activities as a form of assessment, where teachers present them and expect students to watch, comprehend, and reflect on the content.

Many students prefer video lectures over traditional classroom-based discussions because they can focus, review, and understand lessons at their own pace. With the shift from face-to-face learning to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students have relied heavily on video lectures for their academic needs. This is especially important as not all students have access to high-speed internet, and video lectures enable them to catch up on lessons and stay engaged in their studies.

Additionally, these lectures can serve as supplementary resources, reinforcing lessons discussed in class, and fostering independent learning. Students can develop critical thinking skills, and gain deeper understanding into the subject matter.

Electronic Modules (E-Module)

Electronic modules are modules that contain the subject matter of the course, it is just like an e-book where it includes the topic learning outcomes the teachers want the students to achieve, the topics itself, and activities. According to Delita *et al.*, (2022), e-modules are part of learning tools that contain learning outcomes or competencies in each learning activity, material, summary, and systematic evaluation. These e-modules are usually provided by teachers through learning management systems such as the Google Classroom, this makes it accessible for the students so they can read and study the topics on their own. The current e-module developed for purposes of this study facilitates student learning, independently, in groups or conventionally. E-modules are presented with self-study instructions so that students can learn at their own pace (Delita *et al.*, 2022). The researchers also observed that Saint Louis University follows the 5E instructional model which includes five phases: Engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. According to Bybee (2014), this provides a carefully planned sequence of instruction that places students at the center of learning.

E-modules are commonly used by teachers because of their practicality. Some teachers and students prefer e-modules because they no longer need to carry their printed modules to read the discussion for the course, instead they can just open it using their devices. In the study conducted by Syahril *et al.*, (2021), they found that the application of the electronic module is considered to be better than the printed module because in addition to being practical, effective, and increasing student learning motivation, the electronic module can also improve learning outcomes much better than using the print module because it can increase students' critical thinking level.

As observed, teachers post e-modules in the Google Classroom to prepare the students for the discussion of topics in the classroom. Teachers expect the students to scan and read the materials in advance and learn what they need to know. Delita *et al.*, (2022) defined e-modules as "teaching materials or learning media that are presented electronically to support active learning". According to them, e-modules would make it easier for teachers to convey material to their students as well as make learning more interesting for being in accordance with present-day technological developments.

Whiteboard and Marker

One of the oldest and most widely used instructional materials in classrooms is the whiteboard. The whiteboards came into utilization during the late 1980s. Teachers can use it to write their points while they are teaching (Syahputri *et al.*, 2020). The traditional whiteboard enhances student engagement, allows for better visualization of concepts, and provides a more interactive and dynamic learning experience. Students in the traditional whiteboard condition were more attentive and involved in discussions (Entera and Clarin, 2024). It allows teachers to write key points, illustrate concepts, and adjust the pace of instruction based on students' needs. The use of a whiteboard fosters student participation, as they can actively engage by writing, highlighting, and discussing key concepts in real-time. It also allows teachers to give feedback to students immediately (Syahputri *et al.*, 2020).

In the late 1980s, whiteboards, sometimes known as dry-erase boards, became widespread. By the 1990s, whiteboards had mostly replaced blackboards in classrooms (Muchemi *et al.*, 2018). The traditional whiteboard is a popular teaching tool in classrooms worldwide, providing a tangible platform for educators to illustrate ideas. Its physicality allows for real-time interaction, encouraging a culture of involvement. The board's simplicity and ease of use make it easy for teachers to show concepts, change content, and encourage

student participation using markers or chalk (Wong *et al.*, 2023). Despite technological developments, traditional whiteboards are still commonly used in schools. Students continue to view whiteboards as helpful to their educational process and value their efficiency and effectiveness (Syahputri *et al.*, 2020).

Based on the observation of the participants, the whiteboard and marker method of teaching in social studies class is still widely used in the university. Since social studies classes have subjects like micro and macroeconomics that involve mathematical calculation and computation, teachers use whiteboards and markers to discuss the topics. While the teacher is writing on the whiteboard, they are also discussing what they are writing. This method is easy to comprehend when it comes to this subject. It is also utilized when students engage in collaborative work in the classroom where they must write down ideas or concepts to present in class, such as concept or mind mapping, and etc. When teachers have important concepts or information that are missing or not included from their prepared presentation, they also use it as an alternate presentation method.

Benefits of Instructional Materials in Social Studies

Instructional materials play an important role in the learning process of the students. In the study of Nwike and Catherine (2013), it has been seen that students taught with instructional materials performed better than those taught without. This shows that students learn and perform better when they are taught with instructional materials because the use of instructional materials gives the students the opportunity to see, feel and touch the materials during teaching. In this study, the researchers observed that the use of instructional materials have a significant impact on the students.

One of the highlighted reasons for this is the accessibility of these instructional materials, for example, the instructional materials posted in the Google Classroom provided by the teachers such as the e-modules, PowerPoint presentations, and the video lectures allows the students to study at their own pace which promotes self-efficacy among students. In the study of Prado *et al.*, (2019), the utilization of instructional materials has shown potential effectiveness to enhance students' performance and to strengthen positive attitudes and high self-efficacy beliefs among students. Additionally, If the students missed something or are having a hard time understanding a certain part of the lesson, they can read and watch it repeatedly using their gadgets anytime, anywhere.

Another reason is how these instructional materials capture the attention and interests of the students, some teachers are creative in making their PowerPoint presentations and utilized it to be interactive, the researchers observed that when the teacher used PowerPoint presentation the class is more engaged leading to higher retention of concepts in the lesson because students can see, hear, and interact with the content. On the other hand, when the teacher does not use PowerPoint presentations and just sit while reading his/her notes the students get bored and some even sleep when the teacher is discussing the lesson. This is supported in the study of Ravi and Waswani (2020) as they stated that majority of students feel that PowerPoint is an effective tool for teaching. The students preferred PowerPoint over the traditional lecture style in the teaching-learning process because they think it helps them to grasp the content easily.

Challenges of Using Instructional Materials in Social Studies

Based on the observation, these instructional materials facilitate the teaching-learning process effectively since it allows teachers to channel their content and organize their discussion in a structured and systematic way. However, challenges in the usage of the different instructional materials in social studies are still present. These include: Loss of time for the discussion due to the preparation of presentation softwares and the need for internet connection to access the instructional materials posted in Google Classroom.

From the observation of the researchers, presentation slides created from presentation software can take a lot of time in preparation as teachers must set-up and connect their laptops and other technological devices to projecting devices such as projectors and television. It further delays the teaching process especially when there is a technical difficulty. There are instances where teachers' laptops failed to connect to the television resulting in a loss of time for the discussion. Kapadia (2023) supports this claim as presentation softwares like PowerPoint can be prone to technical difficulties including compatibility and device malfunction.

The researchers have also observed that slow internet connection can hinder classroom discussion as both students and teachers are unable to access the internet, particularly educational tools such as electronic modules and video lectures uploaded in the Google Classroom. Because of its inaccessibility, teachers and students are experiencing stress due to the loss of time This delays the discussion and teachers instead

utilizes traditional means of teaching by stating the lessons verbally and using whiteboard and markers to highlight the main content of the subject topic. Akmad and Abatayo (2024) supports this statement as slow internet connection negatively affects the performance of students as it leads to delays and stress.

Another challenge arises when teachers provide instructional materials, such as the electronic modules, video lectures, and PowerPoint presentations to students. Some students lack motivation to read or watch the materials because they are not supervised by the teachers, and some do not study on their own because it is challenging. There is that perspective that it is the job of the teacher to teach the information to them. According to Mealey (1990), many college students are at risk for academic failure. Some believe, correctly or not, that their failures are caused by a lack of ability; others simply do not persevere in the face of difficulty.

Discussion

Through the observation of the researchers, they were able to articulate the common instructional materials used by their social studies teachers, the benefits the instructional materials brought to them, and the challenges they encountered while using these instructional materials.

The commonly used instructional materials in social studies in the form of textbooks, presentation softwares, electronic modules, and whiteboards and markers have supported teachers to teach the content of their lessons to students. The accessibility of these instructional materials has promoted self-paced learning among students, this allows them to deepen their understanding about the course while taking ownership of their learning, and through these instructional materials, teachers were able to capture the attention of the students which makes the class engaged in the discussion. This also leads to a more meaningful relationship between teachers and students. However, challenges in using these instructional materials still persist. Due to the technical difficulties, slow internet connections, and lack of motivation of students, loss of time and stress were prevailing factors that both teachers and students experienced. This problem can be detrimental to students' overall learning as it hinders the teaching and learning process. Nonetheless, instructional materials in both traditional and digital forms are beneficial for teachers since they can share and present their lessons in an organized and interesting manner. It is beneficial for students as instructional materials help captivate their attention and effectively understand the discussions of their teachers.

Textbooks, presentation softwares, video lectures, and whiteboards and markers will continue to be beneficial and helpful in teaching social studies as these provide flexibility where teachers can utilize traditional and digital means of instructional materials. Through these instructional materials, social studies teachers will be able to engage every learner to learn the course with them in a meaningful and effective way.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Instructional materials always go hand in hand with teachers as these materials aid in enhancing the delivery of lessons of every teacher. Through observations of the researchers, they found out that textbooks, electronic modules, presentation softwares, and whiteboard and markers are the commonly used instructional materials by their social studies teachers in their discussions.

They have also found out that while instructional materials provide benefits for both teachers and students, there are still challenges faced by the students in using these materials. In the end, this study showed the relationship between teachers and students, that they are both responsible for achieving what they want to achieve in the class.

From the findings of the study, students and teachers should work together for a meaningful teaching and learning process. Teachers are encouraged to upgrade available instructional materials in school and vary its extent of use to provide more meaningful engagements and activities to students. Teachers continuously enhance their skills on the use of varied instructional materials by attending workshops and trainings specially along teaching social studies subjects.

Declarations

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