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Civic education and enriching learning using collaborated platforms among Uganda secondary school students

¹ Fakuade Olubusayo Victor & ² Gwokyalya Edith Baagala

¹ College of Education, Open, Distance and E-Learning, Kampala International University Kampala, Uganda.

Email: olubusayo.fakuade@kiu.ac.ug

² College of Education, Open, Distance and E-Learning, Kampala International University Kampala, Uganda.

Email: edith.gwokyalya@kiu.ac.ug

Abstract

Social media sites are becoming necessary tools for interaction among students due to their functionality. Students can share, exchange, comment, discuss and create information thereby building knowledge in a collaborative way. However, civic education is not limited to participation in politics and society, it also encompasses participation in classrooms, neighborhoods, groups and organizations. In civics, students learn to contribute to public processes and discussions of real issues. Students can also learn civic practices such as voting, volunteering, jury service, and joining with others to improve society. In this study, collaborated platform was used to enrich senior secondary school students learning in Civic Education. Also, students' attitude toward using the platform for enriching civic education was assessed. Student's preference for a collaborated platform was assessed using focus group discussion (FGD) and data was collected using a questionnaire. The findings show that students appreciate the potentials of the platform in enriching civic education instruction. It was revealed that students have a positive attitude towards the use of social media and also have a preference for civic education. Based on these, it is recommended that, if social media sites are effectively used, it will develop students' attitudes towards learning, enrich teaching and learning of civic education, as well as enhance academic achievement among senior secondary school learners.

Key words: Collaborise platform, Social media, Civic education

1. Introduction

Civic education is challenged and a major concern for those who seek the betterment of the entire citizenry in the tw-enty-first-century world. Effective citizenship is the knowledge, skill, and disposition to work peacefully and constructively across cultural d-ifferences to foster sustainable human-environment interactions. The aim of civic education is to promote the attributes and virtues needed for full citizenship, including contemporary civic values, critical thinking, and autonomous decision-making responsibilities valuable for well-rounded individuals. Civic education also requires that belief systems be brought into the picture in such a way that community members feel secure living without fear of being excluded or marginalized (Johnson and Johnson 2005). Civic education is an abstract idea, in principle. It may encompass particular rights and obligations of lawful citizens, but ordinarily it is used to display the

knowledge, skills, and attitudes that children are expected to acquire to become good and civically active members of society.

Basic content of civic education and major intellectual processes are related in teaching and learning. Teachers know that if learners would think critically and act honourably in response to public issues, they must primarily understand the concepts and its origins, the alternative responses, and the likely significances of these responses. Other forms aim more at the active and responsible citizenship of recent egalitarianisms in Nigeria. Apart from promoting knowledge on functioning of democracy and the role of citizens in a democratic society, civic education stresses the importance of citizens' active participation in decision-making processes and their responsibility for the future of civil society (Torney-Purta, Schwille, Amadeo 1999)

Therefore, the best way to impart the knowledge of civic education is to give opportunities for practicing it in schools and communities. The didactic content and the process of knowledge, virtues and civic skills must be taught and learned together to carry out the mission of civic education which is human development that results in the capacity to initiate, support and improve good practices within the society. This could be facilitated by social media technology if well developed and delivered civic education programs, through the incorporation of technology it can make learning by doing even more attractive and focused on issues bearing direct relevance to the lives and attitudes of the learners.

So, social media use would involve aspects of learning taught to enrich and enhance the pedagogical process that is going on. Good instruction connects the gap between what students already know and what they can learn. Media can involve students, help keep information, stimulate interest in the subject matter, and demonstrate the relevance of many concepts. With the burst and spread of the Internet and social computing, digital tools become prevalent in mediating social interactions and communication in a collaborated fashion. Blogs, wikis, skype, and virtual worlds are part of a suite of social-collaborative tools that support communication and collaboration on a global scale.

And the use of social media for education is on the rise. Many teachers view Web 2.0 as a way new pedagogies, more student-centered and social constructivist, can be developed through online teaching using social media for contribution and collaboration of students to e-learning environments in ways that are markedly different from the first generation of tools for e-learning, which typically operated more in a traditional teaching-centered approach and in which little social interaction and thus almost no social learning was possible. Social media has tools for peer learning and peer assessment, and for creating vibrant active learning communities of practice (Wenger, White & Smith, 2009).

Enriching Civic Education Instructions with Technology

Learning activities are going more and more technologically oriented with technological innovations and invention trends all over the world. Classroom instruction has evolved over the centuries and not limited to chalkboard, chalk piece, diagrams, maps, and other supporting teaching aids. The classroom setup is increasingly becoming technology-based with this 21st Century schooling system, hence, a teacher has to tap into the ever-increasing abilities of these new digital devices to deliver instructions effectively. Today's learners are well seated in media content and the primary language spoken by most of them is technology (Fakuade & Ariyibi, 2017). It is for this reason that, in the educational sector, students continuously apply the use of technology to a variety of tasks and share ideas and opinions about something in society. This is

among the numerous reasons why technology is being heralded as the ultimate tool in 21st-century educational teaching and learning.

The important role of technology in this modern age also participates in calling for due exposure for all individuals to use digital instruments so that they can play the roles of effective functioning members of 21st Century society. A technological tool pertains to the basic parts of our daily lives in the digital age and has installed itself within many classrooms of modern society (Aborisade, 2012). He concluded that to nurture a generation of lifelong learners, self-reliant products, 21st-century workers, and global citizens, it is essential that the teacher is resourceful and competent to infuse the use of digital and information technologies into classroom instructions. Professional resources empower teachers with tools that can improve the teaching-learning process and deliver courses in multi-mode format based on different kinds of learners; face-to-face teaching, coupled with other kinds of teaching, maximizes different learning styles. The devices provide workable platforms through which learners can be more interactive and communicative, as well as digital literate. Teachers and other stakeholders in education must appropriately infuse classroom settings with tools and technology to adequately prepare their students to meet the demands of contemporary society.

Instruction could be made more effective by technology resources which would create a rich learning environment. In this way, digital tools may present alternative modes of communication through text audio, visual, or other multi-media channels that could be exploited by the teacher to improve his delivery. This works well in dealing with the differences in the strengths and weaknesses of abilities and intelligences in students. In simple terms, digital tools give teachers a chance to provide the entire set of students in a class with attention, including those who have special needs. Assistive technology will make classroom instructions more engaging and easier for students facing challenges such as being visually or auditorily impaired. Therefore, technology has, unequivocally, continued to find its way into the most strategic position in education due to its multidimensional use in an instructional process.

Teachers are an integral factor in the integration of technology into the classroom. Indeed, many teachers find it increasingly difficult to use digital tools to make their teaching learner-centered and to ensure the flexibility of teaching styles. This may indicate that they are technophobic, or they do not possess the essential skills required to use the technological tools that would assist them in achieving better instruction in the classroom. There is, however, an under-realization of the full constructive potential of these tools by teachers all over the world, even though digital tools are used for classroom instructions to facilitate and enhance the quality of instructions. Many schools, teachers, and instructors are still experiencing difficulties in meeting the challenges posed by changes in technology and the applications related to their management (Jack Dieckmann & Abelardo, 2001).

Thus, it is upon the school management and other education stakeholders to motivate the teachers to make the teaching and learning activity more effective by using technology appropriately in all cohorts of education. Enrichment of instruction with digital tools would give the teachers a chance to reach the aims of instruction and also involve the learners energetically in the process of teaching and learning. When technological tools are correctly used to teach, there would create full participation among the students to the content of the curriculum and work positively with the teacher and other students inside the classroom.

Educational stakeholders are increasingly promoting the use of social media tools in attempts to open communication channels, make learning more flexible and affective tie students closer to their institution (Heiberger & Harper, 2008). These aspects of the environment could also be leveraged towards enriching the learning experience and getting students more involved in their classes (Junco, 2012a). According to Smith (2011), teachers, and other stakeholders in education can use social media in the educational landscape for community-building, social learning, and the ability for members of the class to interact with each other. Social media platforms, therefore, remain viable tools to improve students' access to learning content and active engagement in classroom activities.

Social Media Learning (SML)Website

The social media learning website is much more private and safer for a learning environment because it allows only teachers to create and manage accounts. Only their students who receive a group code and register in the group can access and join the group (Al-Kathiri, 2014). The site offers the possibility of an easy way to grade students and a means to keep a record of their progress. It includes features for teachers to send quizzes and assignments, give feedback, receive completed assignments, assign grades, store and share content in the form of files and links, and maintain a class calendar. There are features for students to share content, homework, assignments, and quizzes and to receive feedback, notes, and alerts from teachers. There is also a provision for polls, where students can vote, and there is also a provision for parents to view their children's progress and communicate with teachers. Enriquez (2014) revealed that the social media learning site is an effective supplementary tool for learning. It enhances the learning of students as active participation in online discussions and tasks seems to be a good learning platform which is very simple. Most of the respondents in the study of Enriquez agreed that SML site is a good tool for learning to augment face-to-face discussions and a good collaboration site for the student and teacher. Results from Nee (2014) revealed that using the SML site in teaching civic education has a positive impact on the achievement of secondary school students.

Nonetheless, collaborate Classroom is a free web-based teaching platform that enables teachers and students to formulate precise discussions within their very own closed cyber community. The website empowers teachers to continue their class discussions within a structured and closed online community. It offers a means for students to expand on discussions plus access to an internet-based lesson plan that allows for more in-depth participation both inside and outside the classroom. Collaborize Classroom is meant to aid classroom instruction through involving students in web-based activities and discussions that allow for deeper participation both inside and outside the classroom. The first wave of users for these simple tools was teens and young adults; thus, they are presumed to be among the best educated about how to use them best (Loretto, 2009).

Collaboration among students aids learning to work, solve problems with others, and sharpen one's own understanding by sharing insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Liu, Liu, Chen, Lin, and Chen (2011); Pifarre and Fisher (2011) assert that social media can be employed in the classroom to enrich students' collaboration on group tasks as well as interact with others to enhance their knowledge and skills. It is against this background that social media-based instruction to enrich senior secondary school students' learning in Civic Education was developed.

Attitude towards the use of social media

Social media has been widely accepted and used; nevertheless, attitude remains a critical factor that could influence its effective use in the teaching-learning process. Moreover, attitudes are essentially divided into likes and dislikes (Siragusa and Dixon, 2008). With the broad expansion of social media tools in education in recent years, research studies have tried to assess the attitudes of users (educators and students) toward social media in education (Gasaymeh, 2009). Findings, in this regard, report that students have different but generally positive attitudes towards social media. For instance, Nassoura (2012) writes, many students had positive attitudes toward social media site for learning because it positively affected their motivation as well as self-esteem.

Elham Akbari, Soodeh Eghtesad, Robert-Jan Simons (2013) maintain that students' attitude toward the use of social media for learning forms a major factor that would help in successful integration of these tools with classroom instructions. Findings converged that there are significant issues regarding the attitude of students on the use of these new interactive learning tools for effective engagement of learners and active participation in instructional processes. Attitude towards social media may be a very important determinant of the readiness of teachers and students to embrace a social media-based learning environment.

In contrast, social media was previously reported to have a negative impact on secondary school students; the sites can attract the students' attention so much that they become very much engrossed with the sites and almost forget about their work in studies (Dale and Lewis, 2013). They may be easily lured into different social media sites in the process of trying an online source of information (Dale and Lewis, 2013). Most of them get caught in the web of social sites and do not remember the information they were searching for initially. However, social media can be classified into two categories, which are social media by resource and social media by utilization. The social media resource was designed for educational purposes; examples are Edmodo, Collaborize Classroom, My Big Campus, and Schoology. Social media utilization is for social engagement; examples are Facebook, Twitter, among others, but these could be adopted to facilitate classroom instruction (Fakuade, 2021).

Purpose of the Study

Improving students' grasp of Civic Education can be facilitated through the use of technology, once students have acquired the skill to use it. Such is the case of social media. The role these social media sites play in fostering an interaction among people, especially the students, cannot be underestimated. Findings from the research reveal that most of the students mostly spend their time on social media exchanging information and ideas about the happenings of different issues in society. This, therefore, led the researcher to try out social media-based instruction for students at senior secondary school grade since students will have familiarized themselves with such a site for academic work. Therefore, this research is set to find out the possibility of improving learning through social media among senior secondary school students in Civic Education.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to serve as guide for this study

1. To what extent has the use of Collaborised classroom enriched students' learning activities in Civic Education?

2. What is the attitude of students towards the use of Collaborize classroom for enriching their understanding in Civic education?

Methodology

One way pre-test post-test quasi experimental design was adopted. The Fount School International, Bunga hill, Kampala was purposively selected for the study. The study lasted for eight weeks and during this period, students were exposed to instructional civic education video on the using Collaborise Classroom platforms. Thereafter, they were introduced to the platforms using demonstration method. The students were allowed to interact with each of the platforms for three weeks. The usability and acceptability of Collaborise classroom Questionnaire (UACCQ) was administered to the senior secondary school students. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was also carried out to determine students' preference.

Sampling Techniques

The secondary school used for the study was purposively selected based on the following criteria:

- (i) Computer laboratory with minimum of 50 desktop computers that are networked.
- (ii) Alternative power supply to back-up electricity supply.

The choice of senior secondary school 2 students was based on the fact that students in this class would have been exposed to the teaching of governance for one year. 50 students who showed willingness to participate in the study and also claimed to be familiar with the use of internet and social media were eventually used for the study.

Instruments

Two (2) research instrument were used in the study, they are

- Attitude of secondary school students towards Usability and Acceptability of Collaborize Classroom Questionnaire (UACCQ)
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD), the focus group discussion was done based on platform (Collaborize classroom). At the end of the week study, a focus group discussion (FGD) was done where participants were free to relate their opinions, beliefs, the most preferred social media for learning and perceptions and about the two platform as used by them.

The reliability coefficient of UACCQ is 0.88 using Cronbach alpha.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent has the use of Collaborised classroom enriched students' learning activities in Civic Education?

S/N	Items	Freq.	%	Rank
1.	The video I watched through the platform made the difficult civic issues, clearer and simple.	45	90	1 st
2.	Collaborised classroom helps to regain some of the points that were missed out in the society.	38	76	2 nd
3.	I prefer combining social media with traditional classroom instruction because I appreciate learning using computer as it helps build my computer literacy and contribute to civic matters.	19	38	3 rd

During the focus group discussion, learners said that their learning would be bettered by the use of social media (Collaborise Classroom) because it enriched their learning activities on civics. This was made possible through an opportunity provided by the platform to restore the points that were missed due to distractions in face-to-face interactions. The result practically indicates that the respondents of this study are in support of Collaborised classroom as a helpful platform capable of going a long way to enrich their learning activities in civic matters. Also all activities during log in times, each post commented on, and each poll taken, can be viewed in Collaborize classroom. They also said that the teacher does not have to approve their post before it can be visible to their colleagues. On the resource page of Collaborize classroom, resources/tools which suggests different software that can be used for explaining their views and its functions are suggested to the student.

Research Question 2: What is the attitude of students towards the use of Collaborize classroom for enriching their teaching and learning activities?

Table 2: Attitude of students towards the use of Collaborize classroom for enriching learning activities

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.d
1	Collaborize Classroom is a boring platform for teaching and learning civic education	11	1	12	22	2.91	1.23
2	My parent do not encourage me to use internet for my studies	-	2	18	19	2.85	0.79
3	The skills needed to use Collaborize Classroom must be acquired to make the platform interesting and easy to use	30	8	3	6	3.20	1.36
4	My friends do not like Collaborize Classroom so am not motivated to learn it.	6	2	12	26	3.19	1.04
5	My parent do not encourage me to use the computer system because they think it's a waste of time	5	2	11	28	3.28	1.00
6	Discussion process on the platform is more difficult than face to face	10	8	15	13	2.29	1.15
7	Collaborize Classroom it is a good platform that could be used to support teaching and learning	40	3	2	1	3.72	0.81
	Weighted Average	3.0676.57%)					

Table 2 shows that the students had a strong positive perception regarding Collaborize Classroom being good platforms that can be used to support teaching (and) learning (mean= 3.72). This might be because it offers the students the opportunity to interact with themselves and also to voice out their opinions through the platform poll. They also agreed that the skills needed to use Collaborize Classroom should be acquired- that is when the platform will be interesting and easy to use (mean= 3.20). On the other hand, students disagreed that Collaborize Classroom is a boring platform for teaching and learning (mean= 2.91); that their friends not liking Collaborize Classroom can affect their motivation to learn it (mean= 3.19); that their parents do not encourage them to use the computer system because they think it is a waste of time (mean=

3.28); and their parents do not allow them to use the internet for studies (mean= 2.85) Results from the table indicating that the students ought not to be discouraged to use the platform since they disagreed with the statement; the attitude their friends have towards the platform will affect their attitude, and parents cannot discourage them from using the computer system or browsing the internet. The students also agreed that they would need to acquire the skills to use the platforms. These responses indicate that students have a good attitude toward using the platform. The weighted average is 3.06 or 77%. This shows that the students' attitude concerning the use of social media for enrichment is positive.

Discussion of findings

The results indicate that most students feel Collaborised classroom improves their learning because the videos viewed make difficult topics more explanatory and easily understood than when taught using just the conventional method, which is not flexible. This finding is in keeping with that of Lee (2013). Of 16 respondents, 15 opined that social media enhanced their learning experience, while one was neutral about its influence. The fact is that it cannot be unconnected with how powerful social media has emerged in recent relations with one another, particularly among young people. The 21st Century learners have continually shown more fluency in social media usage for all purposes. These students continually look into the features and opportunities offered by these platforms and this should have put them on a firm foundation to fully understand the advantages that can be gained from using social media to enhance the teaching-learning process. It would not be right for a teacher who does not have new technological tools which can make interaction easier to take lightly the power of social media, which is at the door of being a common language that students will use for communication.

Also, the results shown in Table 2 can explain that students had a positive attitude towards Collaborize classroom, which could be due to the types of social media that existed in the past; most researchers used Facebook, which has also been used to enhance teaching and learning activities. Major factors that could have motivated the students' attitude negatively toward the use of Collaborize classroom were that their parents didn't allow them to browse the internet or use the computer when they came back from school because they see it as a waste of time. This fear falls within the work of Dale and Lewis 2013 when they assert that social media sites are very attractive to students. All too often, students become so involved with these sites that they virtually forego their academic work. They can easily get tempted to use the various social media platforms when trying to obtain learning materials online; in most cases, the students end up spending almost all their time on the social media and forget about the course materials they originally intended to look for. Also: "According to Kuppuswamy and Shankar (2010), social media sites grab the attention of students and then divert it toward non-educational and inappropriate actions, including useless chatting. Based on the above statement, we can say that social media sites may have a negative impact on the academic performance of the students and their learning attitude if not properly monitored.

It was revealed by the study students that mentioned above factors cannot affect their attitude towards the use of collaborate classroom. This positive attitude shown by the students could also be as a result of readiness or eagerness to use the platform. This result supported a research work conducted by Akbari, Eghtesad and Simons (2012), their research work indicated that students' attitudes towards the ease of use of social network in general become more positive after the course and the students' attitude towards using the network for educational purposes is positive. Along the same lines Johnston, Chen and Hauman (2013) in their research found out students' perception and attitude towards Facebook was extremely

positive, and the vast majority are members, and they also reacted that would be sad if Facebook should close down. In the findings of Ömer (2012), he suggested that Facebook can be very useful as an educational tool because the attitudes of students toward such activities are mostly positive. Such a finding is supported by the fact that students welcomed the use of social networking sites as a supplementary tool for the curriculum. In his findings, most of the students showed that they love spending time on Facebook and sharing because this helps them improve their language skills.

This finding agrees with the study done by Espuny et al. (2011) where they note a general positive attitude among students regarding social media because it has great potential to improve education. The results agree with those results because they all indicate a positive attitude articulated by students when using Collaborize Classroom to enhance their understanding regarding matters of civics.

Conclusion

This paper sought to highlight and discuss the prospect of social media for enriching teaching and learning of Civic Education by Secondary School Students and their perceptions about its use for such purposes. Social media grab the absolute attention and focus of students and divert that toward non-educational, unethical, and improper activities, useless chatting, killing time in random searching, and not doing their job as per the requirement, so their dependency on social media could be to kill the time. Students and youth use social media mainly for the sake of entertainment and time pass, but it has been assessed that, through design education, social media such as collaborize classroom and any best that is suitable for work online, which includes online tutorials, online lectures, and download of educational materials are fruitful. It allows the teachers to motivate the students to involve and discuss their views on the topic of a lesson. So, students share their thoughts, personal creations and get input from their teachers. Social media has been useful in enriching learning and fostering teamwork between students; now, they are able to talk fast, share data among themselves and with their teachers. Social media has many advantages and disadvantages, it relies on the amount of time and the use students give to it.

Recommendation

This study will therefore recommend that a social media platform such as Collaborize Classroom should be adopted and used by the school as an aid to improving and enhancing the learning of students, particularly in Civic Education. To provide insight and comfort in the use of such social media, teachers should be educated, trained, and oriented adequately. Further, proper checks should be put by parents and instructors/teachers so that students use social media sites for academic purposes and do not deviate towards wrong and unethical activities while online.

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