

APPLICATION OF ICT ON THE DISCUSSION METHOD OF TEACHING AND LEARNING HISTORY IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

Lazarus Luka Maigoro, Ph.D
*Department of Arts Education,
University of Jos*

Abstract

This article explored the discussion method and how ICT could be used to enhance it. The seemingly abstract nature of the history discipline as envisaged by some students sometimes revolves around the method employed by some history teachers to teach the subject. The traditional lecture method often used by some history teachers has further compounded the problem. This write up discussed these difficulties and made recommendations which include provision of ICT tools to history teachers and that the history teacher should also embrace the use of discussion method with the new technology to enhance his/her instruction.

Key words: *ICT, Discussion, Method, Teaching, Learning, History, Tertiary*

Introduction

The acronym ICT is the short term for information communication technology. It refers to the use of electronic facilities such as the internet, computers, televisions, radios, mobile phones, DVD, etc, to facilitate communication particularly educational communication or for research and development, (McKenzie 2005). In the 21st century, ICT facilities have become virtually indispensable in almost every sphere of life ranging from the classroom to the offices, markets, the military, health care, companies, etc. The purpose of this article is to explore the use of the discussion method of teaching and learning history and also how ICT tools could be used to influence it in order to effect a departure from the traditional lecture method which many students perceive to be difficult to comprehend. History as a discipline is perceived by many as an abstract subject; as a result,

many students in tertiary institutions prefer social studies. Part of the problem lies with the teaching method adopted by some history teachers and also the learning method adopted by the students. Most teachers use the traditional lecture methods as against discussion method to teach the subject without exploring ICT facilities. In this respect, ICT is expected to reinvigorate or reinforce the discussion method so as to inject a new activity that would make instruction more interesting to follow on the part of the student and easier to deliver on the part of the teacher. For the purpose of this paper to be achieved, the concept of discussion method would be explored as well as ICT facilities that aid discussion method and the relevance of discussion method. Recommendations will then be made.

Conceptualizing Discussion Method of Teaching History

Discussion method of teaching refers to a situation where the students are imbued with the art of thinking constructively as well as interacting effectively with the rest of the group. In a discussion method students are divided into two or more groups towards constructive discussions on the subject matter in the classroom. In this method of teaching where it could either be class discussion or directed discussion, the teacher only acts as a director by controlling the verbal exchange of ideas across the groups in the classroom. In using this method, the history teacher starts by laying the basis for discussion either through posing challenging questions for discussion or identifying topics and assigning such to each group while the teacher guides the discussion to a logical end,...(Parker 1996).

The directed discussion style subsumes that the teacher acts as the moderator who asks questions, offers suggestions and redirects ideas thereby making the history students interested and even forgetting the restrictive nature of the classroom by discussing freely among themselves and with the teacher. In order to conduct a successful classroom discussion, the following steps are pertinent:

- i. The history teacher should build a good background for the discussion so as to focus students' attention on the problem under discussion. This will assist in restricting the problem under discussion within the time limit allowed while generating interest towards the solution of the problem.

- ii. The history teacher should be ready to accept on “a temporary basis” any wrong idea brought forward. This is because a sudden no or poor or wrong response to an answer by students may demoralize them into thinking that their subsequent ideas will also be wrong thereby killing the discussion.
- iii. Expressing the teacher’s idea at the beginning of the discussion should be avoided until the students have exhausted all theirs. This is to enable them pour out all they know about the matter under discussion.
- iv. Thought provoking questions should be asked by the teacher in order to spur the students to participate fully.
- v. The introverted students should be encouraged while the extroverts should be restrained while maintaining discipline at the same time in line with the understanding and maturity level of the students.
- vi. The chalk or white board should be used to summarize the discussions at intervals while the contribution of students should be acknowledged, misunderstandings corrected and correct ideas emphasized.

Discussion Method of Teaching History Using ICT Facilities

In the 21st century, access to information has been made much more easier through the use of ICT. This has created a paradigm shift today where the major thrust is on the dissemination of information. (BECTA, 2000). In this regard, the history students become active in their group discussions as they now have the opportunity to construct knowledge themselves. The main responsibility of the history teacher therefore is to help the students to create, organize and share information they have acquired through ICT facilities like the computer, VCD, projectors, internet, television, etc.

Using the Computer in the History Discussion Classroom

In group discussions, multi media such as computers could be distributed to each group for proper deliberations. In topics where pictures, animation and video clips are involved, each group could play the film, watch it and make its own analysis of the situation the way it understood it for later presentation to the larger class. (For

instance, if the topic is about apartheid in South Africa, then show pictures depicting South Africa during apartheid, the lifestyles between whites and the blacks, the political and marginalizing situation that led to the agitation for black majority rule and the eventual dismantling of the apartheid policy). Where film clips of these events could be obtained, each group could play it on computer and make their own comments on what they have observed. In this dimension, the students would be equipped with historical, analytical and descriptive skills to create historical knowledge from their own observation.

Another dimension to using computer to teach history using discussion method revolves around the fact that when the teacher prepares his power point, he could load it on all the computers with clearly spelled out tasks, questions and instructions for the students to comply with, (Higgins 2001). This helps to motivate the students' interest, encourage discussion and the exchange of ideas among them. In the process of using the computer, students could be teleguided towards:

- i. Storing their work on a micro-soft word document for the teacher to see and make his own input.
- ii. The teacher could try to get the students or help them with applications on their computer in-order to make their responses more diversified and interesting.
- iii. If you are teaching the students about South Africa, tell the students to draw the map of South Africa and ask them to colour black and white communities with different colours.

Internet and Discussion Method of History Teaching

There are a variety of ways that the internet could be used to teach history using discussion method in the classroom or even outside the classroom. George (2012) stated that one way of doing it is for the teacher to create a blog to store pictures, lessons, worksheets, assignments and any other thing related to the topic thereby making it easier for the teacher to discuss freely with the students either in the classroom or outside the classroom. In the same manner, students are also enabled to upload their own group discussions or presentations on the blog for the teacher to access and make his own contributions. This provides better information to both parties (teacher

and students) to share ideas on line which in some cases, might not be possible in a large class other than the small groups of students.

The internet through blogs, gives students the opportunity to learn at their own time and pace. Introvertive students too who may not possibly participate in the larger classrooms now have better chances of fully participating when they are in smaller groups. Group assignments and seminar topics could also be distributed to each group through their own group blog.

Relevance of Discussion Method of Teaching History

Firstly, discussion as a method of teaching history helps facilitate abstract learning process. Bridges (1987) averred that the discussants, in this case the history students, benefit from this strategy through:

- i. The understanding of the topic under discussion by expanding each discussants' information on a particular topic with valid information from other members of the group
- ii. Fostering of different perspectives on a topic
- iii. Providing the privilege for discussants to present divergent ideas on a topic of discussion
- iv. Members of a particular group are also at liberty to criticize, accept or refute these alternative ideas
- iv. Encouragement of mutual modifications among the views of members of a group to produce a group decision or consensus.

Secondly, discussion method of teaching helps history students to develop higher order thinking skills which equip them with the ability to analyze, narrate, interpret and manipulate information. According to Engle and Ochoa (1988), students are enabled to discuss their own ideas, initiatives and thoughts in some greater detail instead of the traditional method of merely reciting and memorizing facts. In this regard, rather than being passive listeners of whatever the teacher has to say, the learners are active participants and also construct their own understanding of the topic under discussion.

Thirdly, one other relevance of this method of teaching in history instruction is that it creates a shift from what Larson (2000) calls recitation to something closer to a real discussion talk where

ideas are explored instead of the situation where answers to teacher's test questions are provided and evaluated, in which teachers talk less, and students talk correspondingly more; in which students themselves decide when to talk; and in which students address each other directly.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby put forward to enhance the discussion method of teaching history:

- i. Teachers of history should make conscious efforts at self training and practice on the use of ICT facilities in order to make them conversant with the new technology.
- ii. Administrators of tertiary institutions should take deliberate steps towards the acquisition of ICT facilities so as to ensure the availability of the new technology for effective history instruction.
- iii. History teachers should as much as possible incorporate discussion method in the course of instruction in view of its relevance.

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