WINDOWS MOVIE MAKER AND THE TEACHING OF HISTORY

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Abstract

Competence in the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) is a buzz word today given the fact that ICTs have impacted almost all sectors of the global society. Most employers, for example, require people who possess skills in certain ICT when they look for potential employees. Thus, Department of Education 's White paper on e-Education indicates "The ICT revolution has had impact of curriculum development and delivery and continues to pose new challenges for education and training systems around the world." In this regard, schools as social institutions charged with the responsibility of developing human resources cannot overlook the need for inclusion of ICT in the process of teaching and learning so as to empower and equip learners with necessary skills that they will need to function and meet challenges awaiting them. It is against this background that educational researchers are advocating the integration of ICT in the learning and teaching of history in particular and other subjects in general. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to discuss the implications of the turn to ICT for history teaching and learning with particular reference to Windows Movie Maker and history teaching. The essay will mainly focus on: opportunities, costs, the implications on history teachers' professional practice and challenges in integrating Windows Movie Maker into history education. Possible solutions to the challenges will also be emphasised.

Introduction

Not much has been written about the integration of Windows Movie Maker into history education. However, Shaw 's discussion of this software provides a useful and suitable explanation for this essay. According to this author Windows Movie maker is a software that is bought with Microsoft as a package. It is a video editing tool that can

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be utilized to capture raw video footage, edit it and then add titles, transitions and video effects. In simple forms, Windows Movie Maker also allows users to create films from still pictures and sound clips.

The integration of Windows Movie Maker in history education provides learners with an opportunity to create and watch their own film and this enhances their attitude to history. In the process of making a film learners get engaged in a number of tasks including role playing or dramatising a certain historical event. The learning activities such as role playing do not only break the monotony of listening to the teacher narrating historical events but they also act as attitude enhancer to learners since they naturally enjoy playing. In support of this, Stirzaker indicates that her own learners enjoyed role playing and found it to be funny when they made a film. Sharing the same sentiments is Rob De Lorenzo who points out that learners become eager to learn history when they interact with the drama of human history in an active manner and they see themselves as having fun rather than learning. In this sense, they learn best because they are engaged and learn because they want to learn. On the basis of these quotations, it can be concluded that history education can be an interesting process to learners when they are actively involved in it hence Windows Movie Maker as a teaching and learning aid is an appropriate attitude enhancer. Thus, effective teaching and learning of history can be realised through the use of Windows Movie Maker since this learning and teaching aid has a potential of arousing and maintaining learners' interest in history. It is, indeed, a common knowledge that learners learn a subject better when they like it. Farrant captures it well when he claims "The engines of human motivation are interest and desire. When these are working at full power in an individual, remarkable feast of learning can be achieved." It is apparent that the integration of Windows Movie Maker in history education is an endeavour worth undertaking by history teachers.

The Windows Movie Maker (WMM) as a teaching tool

The inclusion of Windows Movie Maker in history education creates an opportunity for learners to acquire, promote and practice skills necessary not only in the learning of history subject but also in the learning of other subjects. As Taylor puts it: "Through animation and digital film, they (learners) are being creative, working collaboratively, becoming stronger

writers, and building self skills." Learners need to develop these skills in order to learn effectively and efficiently. The integration of Windows Movie Maker in the learning and teaching of history, therefore, afford learners with an opportunity to put into practice abstract theories that they learn in class. Learners, for instance, need writing and other skills to respond to examination questions. Such skills can be acquired and practised when they edit their film in Windows Movie Maker. When editing the film they have to write brief but clear captions, titles in the beginning and at the end of the film and these enhance the skills of note making and summarising.

Through Windows Movie Maker learners are able to produce a film that assists them to visualise and retain historical events and concepts. These may be historical events that commercial film makers are not interested in producing due to lack of profit attraction. According to Stirzaker, films produced in Windows Movie Maker help learners to understand history as a discipline better and retain their knowledge of the past. Drawing from Stirzaker's observation, it is apparent that films produced using Windows Movie Maker enables learners to conceptualise and comprehend abstract and remote historical concepts and events. This is not to suggest that films produced utilising other tools or facilities other than Windows Movie Maker cannot assist learners to visualise historical events. However, the underlying fact is that through the use of Windows Movie Maker learners and history teachers can make films that they could otherwise not find anywhere else since commercial film makers are mainly interested in producing films for the market. In this regard, historical events that seem to be of little interest to film consumers are not filmed by commercial film makers hence Windows Movie Maker is of paramount importance in history education since such historical events can be filmed by learners. By producing a film, learners can easily see the relevance of history to real live situation. This is so because they watch films at home and producing films portrays a message that history is not only about the knowledge of stories of the past as described in the text, but that knowledge can be interpreted and transmitted in other forms of media.

Windows Movie Maker allows learners to develop skills to understand films better. The whole process of producing a film enlightens learners on issues surrounding film making projects. Most importantly, learners

will be aware that films do not portray facts throughout their scenes. This is well captured by Simkin who indicates:

> By far the best way to get students to engage critically with film is to first put them behind a camera and then in front of a screen of video editing software. As a consequence of making films, students become sensitized to the various techniques employed by the film maker; camera angle and distance, lighting, focus, music, narrative technique, and editing e.t.c. consequently, they begin to understand how they are manipulated, they begin to see through magic.

It can, therefore, be inferred that learners need hands on experience to understand films better than when they are explained by the teacher. It is of paramount importance to note that learners' knowledge of the past is also influenced by films that they see at home or in cinemas primarily because some of these films explore historical events. Teachers may make learners aware that not all what is shown by the films is true, but films' portrayals may convince learners that the shows are the facts. Information in the beginning of the film, for example, may show that the film is a true story of true events performed by real people. Upon reading such words the learners may be tempted to believe every thing they see on screen. In support of this, Edgerton and Rollins claim that television must be understood as the primary way that children and adults form their understanding of the past. However, when learners are exposed to the process of film making through the use of Windows Movie Maker they may not easily be led astray by distorted historical information shown on television. It is against this background that Windows Movie Maker should be viewed as an important learning and teaching tool by history teachers and learners.

Windows Movie Maker is simple to use and as such teachers and learners do not have to be experts in computers to be able to use it. They only need to know the basics of operating a computer. Jones indicates that he has been using Windows Movie Maker with his learners to make films for a while. His observation is that after a few minutes of showing learners the

steps to follow in importing film into Windows Movie Maker and editing it, they can be left to work out the rest by themselves. Apparently, the learners referred to here understand the basics of operating a computer and as such they required to be guided on using Windows Movie Maker. However, the fact that it only takes a teacher few minutes to demonstrate how to edit the film in Windows Movie Maker indicates that it is easy to

use this software. History teachers, therefore, can use Windows Movie Maker with learners without spending too much time on instructing learners on the methodology of using this technology.

The integration of Windows Movie Maker into history education helps history teachers and learners to achieve the ultimate goal of education which is to prepare learners for future. In this regard Windows Movie Maker exposes learners to film making process which requires multi-skills. These skills include, but are not limited to, proper use of a video camera, editing a film and conducting a research. Thus, the integration of ICTs in general and Windows Movie Maker in particular in the teaching and learning of history open a wide range of career opportunities to learners. According to the American Historical Association, careers for historians in the field of television and cinema may be limited but more opportunities are becoming available in the rapidly burgeoning field of history-related website creation and production of CD-ROMS. Here, a combination of historical training and knowledge of new technologies for dissemination of information will be valuable. In this sense, the historical knowledge that learners acquire through history training coupled with skills in using Windows Movie Maker can put them in a better position to work as film makers, documentary editors and work in other fields in which their expertise may be required.

Windows Movie Maker can also be viewed as a tool that can assist history teachers to put into practice a learner centred approach teaching method. This is the approach that is highly encouraged today. The importance of ICT as an agent of change in teaching practice is well captured in the Department of Education's White paper on e-Education which states:

> ICTs are most effectively applied when viewed as integral to teaching and learning by both learners and teachers. ICT integration supports outcome-based education, which encourages a learner-centred and activity-based approach to education and training. Any ICT integration requires that teachers engage in rethinking and reshaping their engagement with the curriculum.

The Educator as facilitator in the WMM Approach

In this learning and teaching setup there is a teacher role shift from the instructor to the facilitator. He/ she in collaboration with learners, map

the way forward on the project that learners have to undertake. Learners work independently but consult their teachers wherever they encounter problems. At the same time the teacher monitors the process to ensure that it is carried out as planned. In producing a film, for example, learners have to engage in a number of activities including gathering information on a historical event, analysing and evaluating such information, using the video camera and editing the film in Windows Movie Maker. In all these activities learners work on their own, but the teacher acts as a facilitator. As a result a learner-centred approach is enhanced. Most importantly, learners acquire different skills and historical knowledge during the whole process.

Windows Movie Maker allows history teachers to keep a rich bank of audio visual teaching resources from which to draw whenever a need arises. Since films edited in Windows Movie Maker can be saved in the computer and other removable disks, history teachers can keep the films for future use. According to Jones, it is easy to record, copy and transfer information into and from a digital video camera and the computer. It is against this background that Windows Movie Maker should be used by history teachers as learning and teaching tool necessary to assist them to produce and save appropriate historical films. While films available in the market may not necessarily explore historical events as perceived by history teachers, through Windows Movie Maker history teachers have an opportunity to determine the nature of historical audio visual products appropriate for usage in the classroom situation.

Windows Movie Maker makes it possible for users who are connected to internet to send their films to other users through electronic mail. History teachers, therefore, can exchange films with one another from different parts of the world. According to Jones, there are awesome online resources from the sites connected with history such as school History. co.uk site. It is through the use of these links that history teachers can establish agreements on exchanging films. History teachers in Africa, for example, can e-mail their European counterparts films produced in Africa by African learners in suitable and appropriate settings. This exchange of films can also be done by teachers living in the same country. In this sense, history teachers can cross the digital divide and access historical information from many parts of the world. Internet connection can connect history teachers from both urban and rural

areas within nations and internationally. In this way, history learners can benefit from watching films made by other learners regardless of the location in which they are living.

It can help in making history as a subject to retain its place in the school curriculum. In this fast changing world where technology as a driving force has conquered all the societal domains, history does not have to be a stagnant subject in which teachers only use traditional methods of teaching. To this effect, Windows Movie Maker provides learners with alternative method of learning history. Instead of learning solely by listening to the teacher describing the past, learners can learn by doing, watching and listening through the use of Windows Movie Maker. The gist of the apparent impact of ICTs in education is well described in the Department of Education's white paper on e-Education as thus:

> A global revolution is currently taking place in education and training. It is driven by changing nature of work, the realities of information age, new global partnerships and awareness of the need for equal distribution of educational opportunities.

The changes in education and training do not only affect history, but they also affect other subjects in that learners no longer have to be taught only the subject content, but they also have to learn how to use ICTs in relation to different subjects. Learners who aspire to be accountants, for example, will hardly find work if they lack competence in the use of computers even if they have passed their course. This is because many sectors use computers to keep their financial records. It is, therefore, apparent that sooner than later all historians will need to be competent in some ICTs to perform their tasks. In this regard, schools should start preparing learners for future demands hence the need for integration of Windows Movie Maker and other ICTs in the teaching and learning of history.

ICT (WMM) integration in History teaching

The integration of ICT into the teaching and learning of history will have far reaching consequences on history teachers' professional practice. The use of ICTs in general and Windows Movie Maker in particular require teachers to have skills that some of them do not have especially teachers who did not do computer literacy at the teacher training institutions. The methods of teaching history will definitely be affected.

The changes might not be dramatic, but they are inevitable given the rate at which ICTs are utilised in many sectors of the society globally. The potential revolution or evolution of teaching methodologies in the classroom is well summarised by Gouh-Jones et al who indicate: "Because of the widespread use of computers, most professions have been influenced by them in one way or another. Some of the skills which used to be necessary are no longer that important." It is apparent that the traditional approaches of teaching history are likely to be less used in future. This implies that serving teachers will have to be trained in the new methods of teaching. They will also have to learn the skills of using ICTs. Skills in the use of computers are required for teachers to be able to teach learners how to use Windows Movie Maker. Teachers acquire these skills during their pre-service training. In relation to serving teachers, training and workshops are needed not only to improve the skills on teaching methods, but also as a means of getting them involved in the process of implementing and integrating ICTs in the teaching and learning of history. It is also worth noting that ICTs are swiftly evolving technologies and as such even the most ICT fluent teachers need to continuously upgrade their skills and keep abreast of the latest developments and the best practice.

The process of making a film requires teachers to supervise learners in multi tasks. It is only when they have skills in these tasks that they will be in the position to help learners hence the need for training. However, some history teachers resist change and have many excuses pertaining to acquiring necessary skills to enable them to integrate ICTS into history education. Such skills include the use of video camera, role playing and ability to edit films in Windows Movie Maker. The tendency of the said teachers is to show negative attitude towards implementation and integration of ICTs in history education. As Fleming argues, "It is often more difficult for experienced teachers to start using drama because there is more at stake; for the beginning teachers who is already vulnerable the exposure provided in drama is perhaps less of threat." It can, therefore, be inferred that the integration of ICTs in schools is not necessarily a smooth process without any challenges.

The operation of computers depends on availability of electricity. Unfortunately some parts of South Africa especially the rural areas do not have electricity infrastructure. Thus, Don Hellriel et al argue that there

is still a long way to go before all South Africans can enjoy the benefits of ICT because a significant proportion of the total population does not have access to electricity. In this sense, schools without electricity will have to devise means of generating power essential for the operation of computers. Moreover, appropriate computer laboratory is needed to house the computers and to allow proper electrical wiring, cooling, ventilation and security.

Other requirements and possible constraints

The support of school management in creating appropriate conditions and making available resources necessary for integration of Windows Movie Maker into the teaching and learning of history is the cornerstone. Lack of support from the school management may frustrate the implementation of the whole process. According to Sife, Lwonga and Saga administrative support is of paramount importance to the successful integration of ICTs into the teaching and learning process since administrators can provide necessary conditions such as ICT policy, incentives and resources. School management teams can easily support the integration of ICTs into the process of teaching and learning when they know the importance of ICTs. In this regard, Windows Movie Maker is software that is available as a package of Microsoft windows with many programmes that can be used by school management. Microsoft excel for example can be used to prepare budget and financial statements. Through the use of Windows Movie Maker, history teachers and learners can assist principals by making schools' films to market such schools to potential learners and donors. Potential donors for certain school projects may need history of school and this can well be communicated as a film through the use of Windows Movie Maker. In essence, Windows Movie Maker can be used as a teaching and learning aid and by school management. Thus, the integration of Windows Movie Maker in history education is a viable enterprise to be undertaken by schools.

Furthermore, provision for technical support has to be made. These include installing, operating and maintaining computers. However, most schools in developing countries do not have sufficient funds to secure the services of an expert. In schools that offer computer studies education, teachers who specislised in this subject at a teacher training

institute can help, otherwise history teachers will have to acquire basic skills needed to keep the computers in good working conditions. In support of this Sife, Lwoga and Saga point out that technical support is an important part of the implementation and integration of ICT in education system. They go further to show that " in most cases, however, technical support is not available, which implies that trainers (teachers) and students require some basic trouble shooting skills to overcome the technical problems of using ICTs." The central point is that history teachers need to have computers functioning properly in order to use Windows Movie Maker.

Another key factor in the integration of ICTs in history education is availability of financial resources. Schools need to have money in order to buy computers hardware and software. The installation and maintenance of such computers need to be financed. According to Sife, Lwoga and Saga availability of financial resources is a basic ingredient to the successful integration of ICT in education. While the availability of money may not be a problem with schools that are economically well off, most schools do not have enough funds. However, for history teachers and learners to use Windows Movie Maker, computers and digital camera have to be bought. Poor schools may have to wait for the government to supply them with the needed resources, but it is not possible for the government to provide all schools with the required infrastructures within a reasonable time. Alternatively such schools can request potential donors, locally and internationally, to extend a helping hand. Indeed, there are stories of schools that have successful secured technological resources from donors in South Africa and other countries.

Despite all the challenges discussed above, it is possible for schools in South Africa and other developing countries in general to integrate Windows Movie Maker into the teaching and learning of history. In this regard, all stake holders in education including schools, parents, government departments and potential donors need to work together in an effort to make the integration of Windows Movie Maker in history education a success. Khanya project in Western Cape Province (South Africa) epitomises the notion that collaboration among many stakeholders in education can lead to successful projects in schools. According to the Western Cape Education Department, Khanya project

was launched in 2001 to coordinate efforts by different stakeholders and donors to support education using technology, while striving to bridge the digital divide and helping to prepare the Western Cape for the digital economy of the 21st century. So far a total of 18306 computers are used in Khanya schools while 13034 educators have been empowered to use ICT basically for curriculum delivery. This success is credited to partnerships between the project, private businesses, non-profit making organisations and other government departments. Against this background, it is apparent that necessary infrastructures and computers in all South African schools and schools in other developing countries can be made available. Thus, the integration of Windows Movie Maker in history education is possible. The developments in schools obviously cannot happen simultaneously. However, collaboration between different stakeholders in education is a prelude in realising organisational goals and aims including the integration of ICTs in education.

Conclusion

In this article it was essay argued that the integration of Windows Movie Maker in history education can be of benefit to history teachers and learners. In the world that is dominated by the use of ICTs, the essay illustrated the need for teachers and school administrators to be competent in the use of ICTs. Against this background, it is clear that history teachers' professional practice is going to be affected since teachers will have to adopt new methods of teaching. Thus, training, workshops and refresher courses are going to be necessary in ensuring that all history teachers are able to use Windows Movie Maker and other ICTs. The essay showed that there are challenges which have to be addressed in order to ensure proper integration of ICTs in education.

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