The Use of Media in Secondary Social Studies: Recent Development in Education

By

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Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The multimedia has become a very much important phenomenon in the life of everyone, from elderly to youngsters. Nowadays, students are all the time exposed to a great deal of time in front of the media since a very young age. Researchers argue that if we want our students to enjoy our lessons, we should prepare lessons that are close to what they really enjoy doing, and what else if not the multimedia?

On the other hand, as teachers, we are all the time asked to make use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) during our lessons. Social Studies teachers especially are continuously being encouraged more than ever to make use of such an important resource. Social Studies deals with various aspects of human life, and therefore it should definitely not be a problem to incorporate such a resource in various Social Studies lessons.

This work is going to be dealing with the way ICT, especially PowerPoint Presentation and the Internet is being incorporated in a Social Studies classroom in 2010. This study will be dealing with the students' experiences in the Social Studies classroom and would reveal whether teachers are using ICT in delivering their lessons or not; and what they are doing to exploit such an important resource.

1.1 The Study

Every study or research has its aim. The aim of this study is to find out the way by which teachers, in the year 2010, are delivering the Social Studies lessons. Are they making use of ICT during lessons, considering that they are all the time being asked and encouraged to do so by their superiors? And if ICT is being used, to what extent? Is it being used throughout the whole lesson

or is it being used partially at a point during a lesson? What do the students think of having a lesson through the use of ICT?

These and similar questions are going to be answered in this study.

This research took the form of quantitative research with four form 3 classes from four different schools, namely, St. George Preca College, Girls' Secondary Maria Assumpta; St. Benedict College, Girls Junior Lyceum; St. Nicholas College Boys' Secondary; St. Nicholas College Girls' secondary. The questionnaire was constructed with the objective of finding out whether teachers are using ICT in their lessons and to what extent.

Before the data was presented, there were two chapters which were incorporated in the front part of this essay. These consisted of a chapter which explored some literature that was available on the use of ICT in education at the time of study and the chapter on methodology. This explains why a quantitative methodology was utilized for the purposes of this study.

The following chapters then discuss the finding and analysis and the general conclusions that were drawn from this study and the suggestions of what has to be done.

1.2 Conclusion

The emphasis to make use of such an important resource is not being made only in Malta but worldwide. Law et al. (2008) however, argued that in spite of all the changes that ICT brought with it, many traditional activities in the classroom, are still being evident

Throughout this study, we will find out whether Law et al's (2008) assertion is even present in Malta two years later.

First, through the following chapter, we will be dealing with the literature available on the subject.

Chapter 2
A Theoretical Underpinning of the Use of ICT in Schools

2.0 Introduction

In this short resume' of the literature that is available regarding the topic ICT in schools, I am hereby going to discuss issues that are related to the use of ICT during lessons.

This chapter is going to be divided into four main categories. First we are going to take a look at the use of ICT in general. Then, the discussion will turn to the role of the teacher in a Constructivist environment. This will be followed by a discussion about the use of ICT in social studies, which will be complemented by a critical discussion of the use of ICT in education.

2.1 Integrating ICT in the Curriculum

This first section of Literature review will be dealing with the use of ICT in the Curriculum. Pelgrum and Law (2003) asserted that by the end of the 1980s, the term 'computer' was replaced by the term 'Information technology' (IT), later to be replaced by the term 'Information and Communication Technologies' (ICT). In fact, the term ICT came into being by 1992, when e-mail started to become available to the general public. It is since then that ICT in schools was introduced.

Pelgrum and Law (2003) stated that the introduction of micro-computers at school was aimed at making lessons more effective, hence more motivating. In fact, Law et al. (2008) asserted that "*young people who have always been surrounded by and interacted continuously with ICT develop a different approach to learning and knowledge management from students who have not had this opportunity*" (p. 14).

According to Pelgrum and Law (2003), nowadays, ICT brought about major changes in the way we teach and learn. However, Law et al. (2008) argued that in spite of all the changes that ICT brought with it, many traditional activities in the classroom, are still being evident nowadays, even though, according to Pelgrum and Law (2003) *"ICT brings with it widened possibilities for learning that are independent of place and time"* (p.52).

We cannot move on without mentioning one of the best tools in ICT, the Internet. Pelgrum and Law (2003) argued that since the Internet became available to everyone and made learning easier and more enjoyable, it has been easier for teachers and students alike to get access to educational content. However, teachers have to spend a lot of time to locate appropriate content. This is also the case with standalone educational software. In fact, Pelgrum and Law (2003) argued that *"in many countries there is still a serious lack of content available in the native language and which is compatible with the national curriculum"* (p. 55). This is not the only problem. One needs to dig deeper and see whether there are other implications.

Pelgrum and Law (2003) went on to say that another obvious implication of ICT is a financial one. In their own words:

> Equipping schools and keeping them up to date with ICT equipment is a very expensive operation, not only due to the necessary hardware and software purchases, but also because of recurrent costs associated with maintenance and support and, especially nowadays, the fees of using high-speed internet connections (pp. 55 – 56).

In fact, they argued that while the wealthy countries would afford to keep with the changes and needs of ICT in education, the poor countries would be left far behind, if they are not being helped by the wealthy countries themselves.

2.2 The Role of the Teacher in a Constructivist Environment

In spite of the pros and cons that ICT brought with it, and which to some extent has been discussed in the previous section, Khine (2003) stated that

> The web is where constructivist learning can take place. The web provides access to rich sources of Information; encourages meaningful interactions with content; and, brings people together to challenge, support or respond to each other (pp. 22 – 23).

Undoubtedly, Technology is one of the main components discussed by constructivists. Johnston and Ng'ambi (2006) were two researchers who spoke about the concept of constructivism and put in front of their readers the idea of the teacher as a coach rather than information giver.

Becker (1998) also spoke of constructivism when he said that the more constructivist the teacher, the more s/he uses the Internet. He went on to say that teachers who regard education as primarily the giving of facts to students, according to a fixed curriculum sequence, are much less likely to exploit the Internet than constructivist teachers.

Pelgrum and Law (2003) agreed when they claimed that teachers play a crucial role in the adaptation and implementation of ICT in education, since they are the key to making learning happen. Furthermore, they claimed that educational reforms should assign new roles to the teacher as more responsibilities to learning are given to the student. The teacher should be there to guide the student. They went on to say that for this to happen, teachers must be given opportunities to regularly update their ICT knowledge and skills as well as to exchange their views on changing curricula and pedagogical practices with the integration of technology into education. Pelgrum and Anderson (2001) called this the new educational paradigm.

Pelgrum and Law (20034) went on to say that *"more student-directed learning methods would require different forms of ICT use to support newer forms of pedagogy"* (pp. 23 – 24). For this reason, teachers have to be proficient in such pedagogical approaches.

Carlson and Gadio (2002) asserted that using ICT would definitely leave the teacher with a sense of satisfaction.

A very important assumption was made by Pelgrum and Law (2003) when they stated that it is not the most important step for teachers to know how to make use of ICT. They should also know how to make use of it in pedagogically meaningful ways in the school curriculum.

Rickards (2003), on the other hand, questioned the ability of the teacher to make effective use of ICT and utilise it in a meaningful manner in his/her lessons. This was in fact also highlighted in Pelgrum and Anderson's (1999) SITES-M1 cross national survey.

This survey reported that both principals and technology coordinators perceived teachers' lack of knowledge to be the second most serious obstacle in implementing ICT in the curriculum. Pelgrum and Law (2003) claimed that one of the reasons for this is that there is lack of ICT courses for teachers. They went on to say that "*it often also happens that some students are more IT-literate than their teacher, and some teachers may see this as a challenge to their traditional role of being the more knowledgeable expert in the classroom*" (p. 64).

Being IT literate is not enough. Pelgrum and Law (2003) argued that teachers should be motivated and confident with ICT to motivate their students. The rapid changes in technology,

according to these two researchers could also make it difficult for teachers to make use of ICT in class. In fact, Pelgrum and Law (2003) asserted that "*research findings show that teachers who use ICT in ways that add value to the teaching and learning process, such as to increase students' motivation or to stimulate higher order thinking, are relatively rare*" (p. 66).

If what literature says about ICT is true for general education, it is more so for Social Studies.

2.3 The Use of ICT in Social Studies

Mason et al. (2000) started by saying that through the use of ICT, Social Studies teachers can teach the subject in ways that were not possible in the traditional classrooms. Today, we speak of a more modern way of teaching. By doing so, teachers can most effectively take full advantage of technology by introducing students to activities in which skills and contents are thought more actively and meaningfully. Frederick (1999) agreed when he stated that the Internet has become an integral part of education as it opens the way to an enormous range of resources. What Fredrick (1999) stated can be applied to Social Studies.

According to Whitworth and Berson (2003), within the social studies, technology has served as an important instructional tool. In fact, the impact of computers and other technology media on Social Studies is immense. They went on to say that findings reveal that Internet use and accessing information on the web remains the most common use of technology in Social Studies. In fact, Whitworth and Berson (2003) asserted that through the computer, students may gain access to expansive knowledge links and broaden their exposure to diverse people and perspectives; hence, affording students the opportunity to become active participants in an increasingly global and interactive world. Johnson and Rector (1997) claimed that when the

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Internet is used within an instructional strategy, it supports the National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum Standards.

In consensus with Pelgrum and Law (2003), Mason et al. (2000) asserted that it is important that teachers should learn how to use technology to make their teaching better. It is important for teachers to know how to make effective lessons and effective use of technology, rather than to know how to use specific computer skills.

Whitworth and Berson (2003) asserted that nowadays, with all the recent advances in technology, computers are serving many more functions than simply accessing information through the Internet. Through computers, teachers and students are equipped with different entry points which shall now be briefly examined.

2.3.1 Subject's website

Mason et al. (2000) said that in this era of globalisation, the Internet provides the Social Studies teacher with tools that can help enhance students' way of learning, beyond the traditional use of textbooks. Frederick (1999) asserted that one of the best ways to use the Internet to help students and teachers, is to create a website for a school's social studies department. Frederick (1999) said that *"everything that teachers once displayed on bulletin boards, from traditional essays to students' artwork, can be posted on classroom or school websites"* (p. 4). Whitworth and Berson (2003) agreed on this point when they claimed that nowadays there is a growing emphasis on teachers, classrooms and schools to create their own WebPages. Sackman-eaton (1999, as cited in Whitworth and Berson (2003) asserted that through this medium, students would be able to

verify assignments and due dates, use links, access news and research sources, and e-mail their teacher. WebPages could also serve as a tool for parents to check their child's progress.

2.3.2 Virtual Field trips

Another way of using the Internet, according to Frederick (1999) is by making use of virtual field trips. These are trips, for example, to the white house, via the Internet, from the comfort of the teachers' and/or students' homes. Here the students would be able to go on an educational visit virtually, from the comfort of their homes. Whitworth and Berson (2003) claimed that *"there has been an explosion of a variety of virtual tour sites that allow students to move about the scene, wherever they wish, as well as listen to speeches, watch video footage, and play interactive gaming quizzes"* (p. 473).

2.3.3 Web Quests

Another useful way of using the Internet with education is through the use of webquests. Whitworth and Berson (2003) said that web quests have also become an increasingly popular tool used in the classroom. They asserted that the Internet no longer offers access to primary resources and information. The web has nowadays become a tool that offers more interactive participation by the learner.

2.3.4 CD ROMs

Without doubt, technology has to do with other resources, not only the Internet. Whitworth and Berson (2003) claimed that literature reveals that there is also a variety of software which is now available for the Social Studies, including some of the more traditional forms of CD-Rom, educational games and tutorials. They asserted that *"CD-ROMs offering simulation exercises*

provide opportunities for real-world decision making and allow students to experience the consequence of their decisions as the exercise unfolds, thereby increasing strategy building and critical thinking skills" (p. 482).

2.4 Critical Lens

Although ICT have a lot of advantages, Mason et al. (2000) also brought to their readers some disadvantages of this tool.

They claimed that technological advances have provided many advantages in the learning process of children in developed countries and many disadvantages in the learning process of children in developing countries. The latter countries remain poorly connected.

Other disadvantages were mentioned such as how,

> According to the National Centre for Education Statistics, ninety five percent of public schools and sixty three percent of classrooms are connected to the Internet. While many educators would agree that the Internet provides an extraordinary opportunity for enriching teaching and learning, they also hear about the dangers or risks of cyberspace (p.5).

According to Mason et al. (2000), among the risks, is the access to inappropriate information. This has also been agreed by Whitworth and Berson (2003) when they explained that research has shown that there are wide concerns with students using the Internet including inappropriate sites and images such as pornography, hate sites, conspiracy sites, and sites that simply contain false or inaccurate information. For this reason, Whitworth and Berson (2003) argued that it is important to teach the students, not simply how to use the Internet, but to develop critical

thinking skills so that they can learn to make informed decisions and judgments about information they encounter on the Internet.

This was also agreed upon by Turkle (1995) when she asserted

> The new practice of entering virtual worlds raises fundamental questions about our communities and ourselves [...] for every step forward in the instrumental use of a technology, there are subjective effects (p. 232).

Another critic of ICT came from White (1997) when she argued that technology may simply be a more sophisticated and more expensive way to meet the same learning outcomes as produced by more traditional methods, even though Diem (2000, as cited in Whitworth and Berson, 2003) argued that technology has a positive influence on learning in social studies classrooms.

In spite of all the advantages (and disadvantages) of ICT, Whitworth and Berson (2003) so correctly revealed that while billions of dollars are being spent in America to incorporate technology in the classrooms, still some Social Studies teachers do not use technology at all in their lessons. Keiper, Harwood and Larson (2000, as cited in Whitworth and Berson, 2003) claimed that one of the reasons for this is because teachers are not being trained to use technology in class, hence there are obstacles of access and reliability of equipment.

Whitworth and Berson (2003) concluded by saying that the emergence of new uses of technology in the Social Studies literature is apparent. However, they said that *"as technological advancements have grown over the past few years, a slight emergence of new and innovative uses of technology in the Social Studies have emerged"* (p. 483).

2.5 Conclusion

In this synthesis of the consulted literature on the subject, the readers have an overview of the importance of ICT in class in general, and the importance of ICT in social studies, in particular, through the eyes of the various researchers that studied and researched the subject.

Although constructivism as an approach to learning is being widely proposed, these researchers revealed that learning should become more student-directed if we want it to become a life-long process. Voogt and Odenthal (1998) in fact claimed that the students should become more active, independent and responsible for their own learning. This, obviously, has to be done with the help of professional coaches (the teachers). Through this, we would be creating active students and citizens.

Living in a democratic country, it seems suitable to conclude this chapter by Mason et al. (2000) who stated that,

> Within a democratic society, citizens need various types of knowledge; consequently, educators must assess how new technology driven forms of knowledge advance the purposes of [education in general and the purpose of] social studies education [in particular] (p. 9).

Chapter 3
Methodology

3.0 Introduction

After the discussion about the literature available on the subject, we will now turn to a discussion about the methodology employed in conducting this study. This chapter will be discussing the reasons for this study, the methodology employed, sampling, how the researcher gained access and maintained entry, the respondents, problems encountered and how the researcher dealt with the data gathered.

3.1 Why this study?

This study wants to find out what social studies teachers in different schools are doing to make Social Studies lessons interesting for students, and hence more fun. This study wants to investigate the use of ICT, which in today's educational world is considered to be a very much important resource, in the Social Studies lessons and the students' response to such resource availability (or lack of it).

To find this out, four form 3 classes in four different schools were interviewed.

3.2 Methodology Employed

This study was conducted through the use of quantitative data gathering. However, some qualitative data has also been included when the researcher wanted to find out the opinion of her informants.

This study took the form of a questionnaire. As already stated, some of the questions required simply statistical figures, while others required the respondents' own opinion on the subject matter.

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) maintained that the questionnaire translates the research objectives into specific questions. The answers, in return, will provide information about what the researcher is trying to find out.

According to these two researchers there are three types of questions used in questionnaires. Questions can either be close-ended questions or open-ended questions or contingency questions. In this study, a combination of all three types was used.

3.2.1 Close-ended Questions

Close-ended questions oblige the respondents to simply give a '*yes*' or a '*no*', the answer closest to his/her own views. These types of questions are easy to ask and quick to answer and their analysis is straightforward. In this study, the majority of the questions were close-ended.

3.2.2 Open-ended Questions

Open-ended questions, on the other hand, are questions to which the informants have the possibility to express their own views openly. In this type of question, the more information given to the researcher, the better. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) said that with open-ended questions, *"thoughts can be expressed freely, spontaneously and in the informants' own language."* (p. 254). However, open-ended questions are more difficult to analyse.

Only some of the questions in this study took this form. The objective of this was to find out the students' own opinion on what the researcher was trying to find out.

3.2.3 Contingency Questions

Within this study, contingency questions were also included. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) maintain that these are questions which might be relevant to some respondents but not to others. The researcher determines whether it is relevant for the respondent to answer the contingency question by first asking him/her a filter question. The contingency question will be applicable depending on the answer given to the filter question.

3.3 Sampling

In conducting the study with these students, the researcher had to make use of probability sampling. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) maintained that in a probability sampling, all the units have the same probability of being included in the sample. In this study, all students in form 3, in these four particular schools, had the same chance of being included.

3.4 Gaining Access and Maintaining Entry

Permission to conduct these interviews was asked through a request sent to the Education department in Floriana. They did not find any difficulty to grant the researcher permission to conduct her study.

Then the researcher had to get permission from the head of schools. One of the schools did not find any difficulty about its students being interviewed. In another two instances, the researcher had to send the e-mail twice before she received permission from the head of school. Another school did not reply to the repetitive e-mails sent by the researcher, in spite of all the persistence from her side. Consequently, the researcher had to contact another school.

3.5 The Respondents

The number of respondents in this long essay adds up to seventy eight students spread across four different schools, namely, St. George Preca College, Girls' Secondary Maria Assumpta; St. Benedict College, Girls Junior Lyceum; St. Nicholas College Boys' Secondary; St. Nicholas College Girls' secondary.

The age of the students who responded to the questionnaire varied from thirteen to fifteen years of age.

3.6 Responding to the questions

The filling in of the questionnaire lasted on average twenty minutes and it took place during a Social Studies lesson in the respondents' respective schools.

All of the answers were recorded in writing by the students themselves. The majority of the questions required ticking in the answer most relevant to the students (please see appendix 1).

It should be noted that some of the questions required more than one choice of answer. Other questions were asked to obtain the respondents' opinions and, therefore, the respondents were free to express themselves freely, spontaneously and in their own language.

3.7 Problems

As already stated, the majority of the schools obligingly agreed to participate. However, not all schools were so obliging.

A particular school did not set an appointment with the researcher, in spite of her repeated attempts by e-mail with the head of school. Consequently, the researcher had to contact another school. This is the reason why there is not a balance between the number of boys and the number of girls taking part in this study.

3.8 Ethics

Anonymity and confidentiality were the key ethical issues which were taken into consideration when conducting this study with the students. Anonymity was maintained by separating the identity of the informants from the information they gave.

Furthermore, the respondents were only identified through a number which was unique to each one of them transcribed in the beginning of each questionnaire. Where information could be clearly identified as deriving from a particular respondent, it was not included in the final write-up.

3.9 Post-activity data management and Analysis

All the information that was gathered from the respondents and the main issues derived from each section were plotted on a spreadsheet. This facilitated the researcher's analysis. The information could then be analysed in view of the data gathered from the questions addressed to a given respondent. This was then compared with issues raised by other respondents.

The data was then discussed and analysed in a separate chapter

3.10 Conclusion

The above is a detailed description of the methodology used in this study, how the questionnaires were conducted and some of the problems which had to be faced during field work. The following chapter will present the findings and analysis of this study.

Chapter 4
Findings and Analysis

4.0 Introduction

This chapter would be dealing with a discussion about the findings of this study together with the analysis of what has been found. To do so, this chapter is going to be divided into 9 sections.

The first section would be dealing with the students' favourite subject in order to find out where Social Studies rank. Then we would be looking at the subject per se under the heading 'Do we Need to Worry?' Here we would be dealing with the students' perception to Social Studies. The following section would then be dealing with the use of Computer labs in Social Studies lessons to find out the students' opinion on the matter and what motivates them most. Than we would be discussing the language in which the Internet and educational Social Studies packs comes about, to find out whether the fact that they do not come in the native language effects our students or not, considering that Social Studies is being taught in the Maltese language. The use of Internet with Homework would be discussed next to find out whether this tool is being exploited both in schools by teachers and at home by students. The importance of a Social Studies website in schools would follow the discussion. Then the discussion would turn on virtual field trips. The chapter would then be concluded by a brief discussion about the online risks that students could come across when using the Internet.

As already stated in the previous chapter, the study was conducted with students from the following four schools: St. George Preca College, Girls' Secondary Maria Assumpta; St. Benedict College, Girls Junior Lyceum; St. Nicholas College, Boys' Secondary; St. Nicholas College, Girls' secondary. The following is an overview of the students who were interviewed with regards to this study:

School	Number of Students interviewed	Percentage
St. George Preca College, Girls' Secondary Maria Assumpta	27	35%
St. Benedict College, Girls Junior Lyceum	19	24%
St. Nicholas College Boys' Secondary	17	22%
St. Nicholas College Girls' secondary	15	19%
Total	**78**	**100%**

Table 4a

A total of seventy eight students in all were interviewed. Thirty five percent of those interviewed came from St. George Preca College, Girls' Secondary Maria Assumpta, twenty four percent came from St. Benedict College, Girls Junior Lyceum, twenty two percent came from St. Nicholas College, Boys' Secondary and nineteen percent came from St. Nicholas College, Girls' secondary.

4.1 Favourite subject/s – Where Does Social Studies Rank?

Before starting the actual study, the students were asked to highlight their favourite subject/s. All the students highlighted more than one favourite subject. Graph 4a below shows the students' preferences. Since the students were allowed to choose more than one subject, the amounts are not in percentages but in actual numbers.
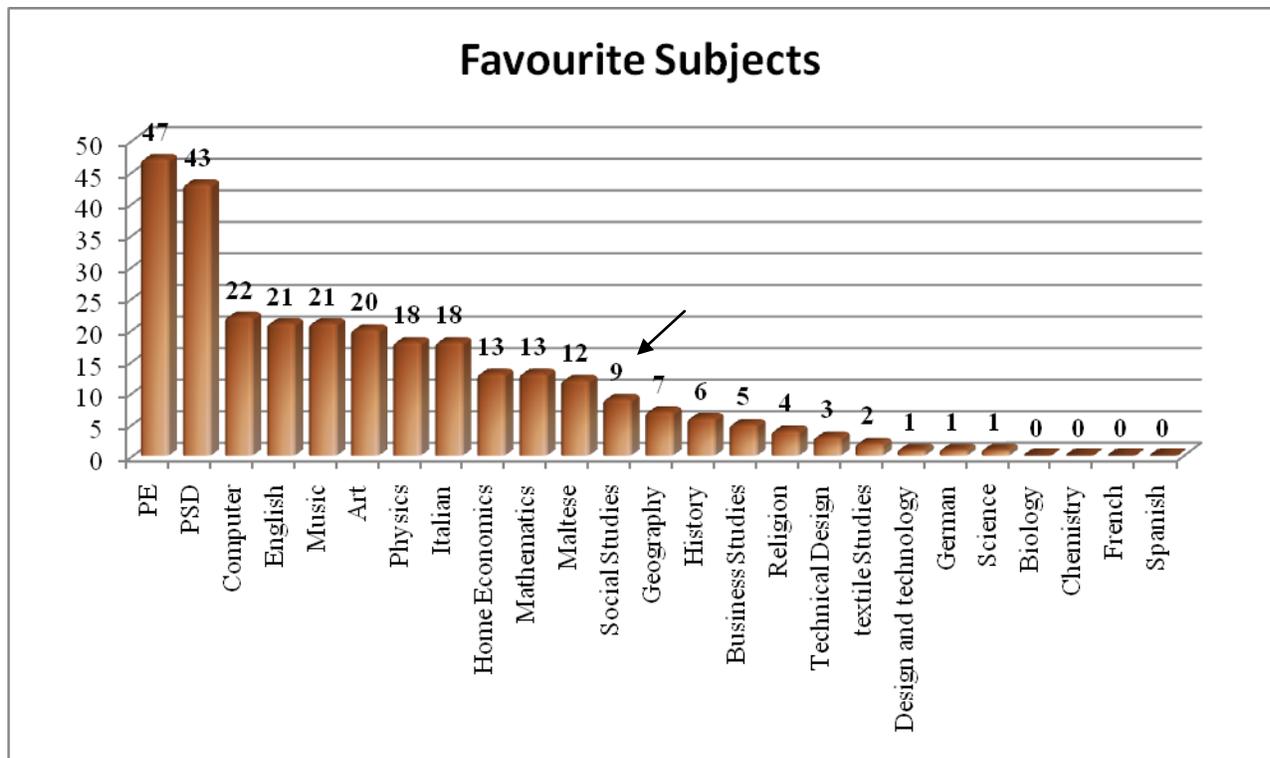
Graph 4a

This 'test' was conducted to find out what students think of Social Studies. As the above graph clearly reveals, out of seventy eight students interviewed, only nine students marked Social Studies as a favourite subject. Is this a cause for worry?

4.2 Do we need to worry?

When the students were being asked specifically to rank the subject from one to ten, however, only the minority, that is, forty two percent said that they do not like the subject, giving the following reasons: boring lessons, tedious lessons, not my favourite lesson, tedious subject, the teacher.
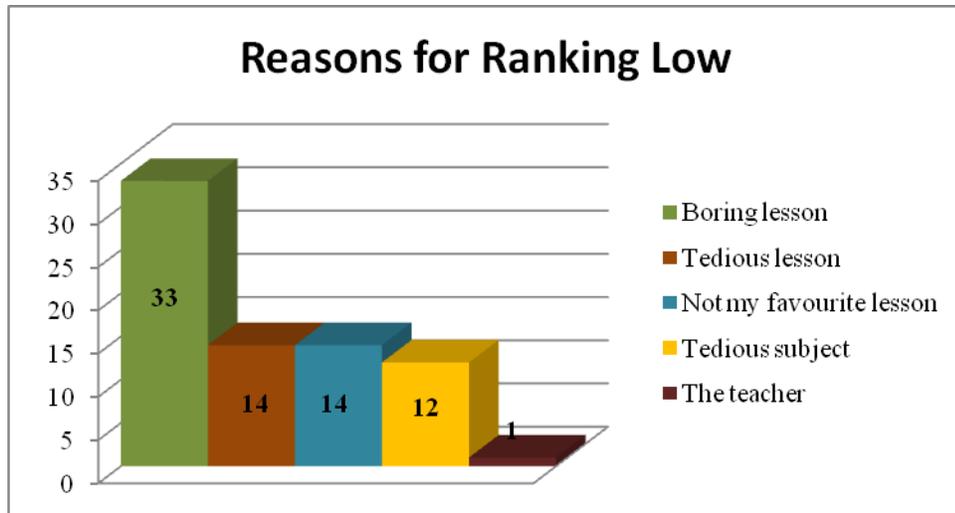
Graph 4b

Encouraging is the fact, however that, on the other hand, fifty four percent of the students said they like the subject a lot, in fact there were students who even marked it as their favourite. As graph 4c hereunder clearly illustrates, the reasons they gave were that the lessons are interesting, they love the subject, they are urged to participate and to think during lesson, and they are all the time engaged in different activities so the lesson is never boring.
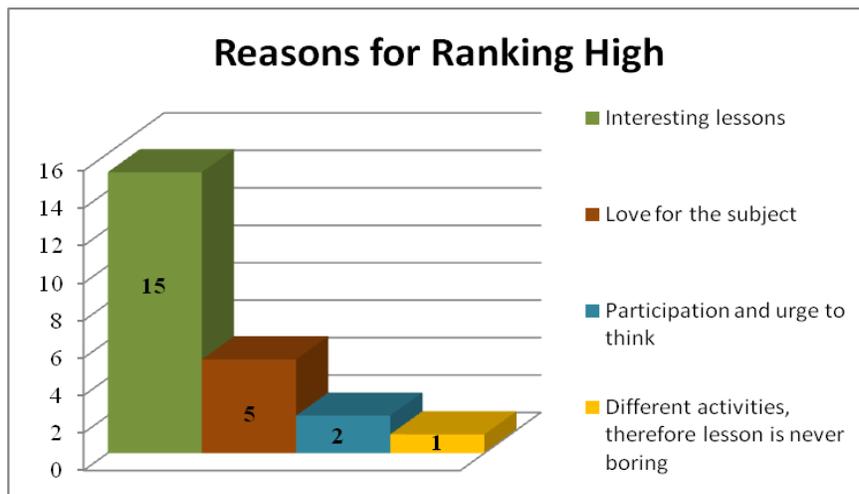
Graph 4c

In my opinion, one has to take into consideration what both the students who like the subject and the students who do not like the subject said. One has to make sure to act upon what the students who ranked the subject low said and work to make lessons more interesting, more motivating and hence more fun. On the other hand, one also needs to build on what the students who ranked the subject high said and try to make lessons more interesting than they already are, in order to draw the students' attention more to the subject and bring new students to love the subject as well.

The majority of the students who do not like the subject as much asserted that the situation is not so bad, and things could be arranged. In fact fifty eight percent asserted that, if one takes into consideration certain aspects, the Social Studies lessons would be more motivating. They mentioned the following: less teacher's involvement, more students' involvement, more activities, more use of computer labs, less writing, and more discussion. These are also highlighted in graph 4d hereunder.
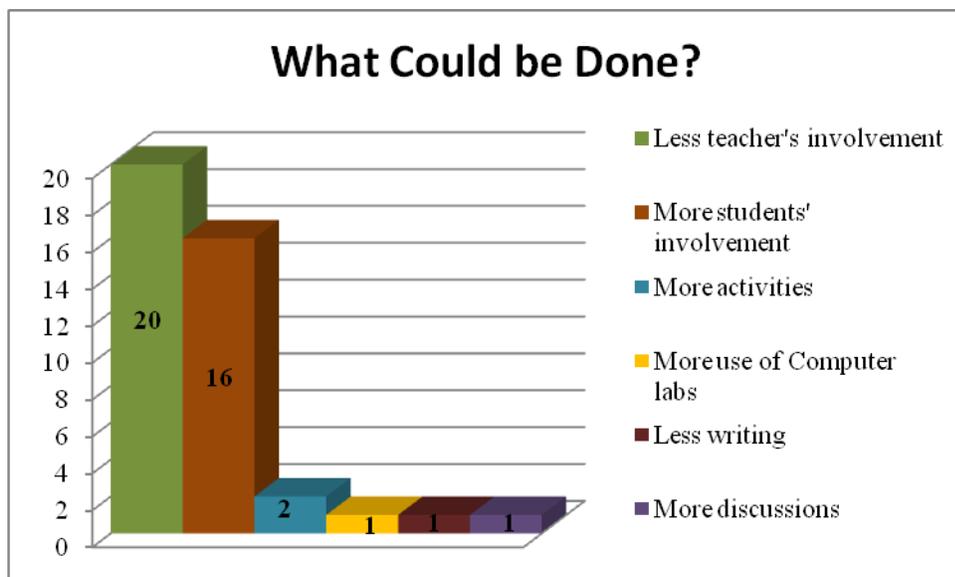
Graph 4d

Pelgrum and Law (2003) asserted that although nowadays ICT brought about major changes, however, many teachers are still making use of traditional activities. This is clearly evident in the Maltese classrooms, especially where Social Studies is concerned, and could be clearly seen from the suggestions our students have made above. From these findings, one can conclude that the problem does not lie in the subject per se, but in the way it is being taught. It is evident that our classrooms need to adopt a bit more to the constructivist approach. In fact, the majority of the students agreed with Johnston and Ng'ambi (2006) that there should be less teacher's involvement and more students' involvement in the process of their learning.

4.3 The Use of Computer Labs During Social Studies Lessons

One of the best strategies to use, in this regard, is undoubtedly the use of Computer labs. As chart 4a hereunder is illustrating, when asked whether their teacher has ever made use of Computer labs during Social Studies lessons, the majority of the students, that is fifty one percent, agreed that there have been times when their teacher did take them to the lab.
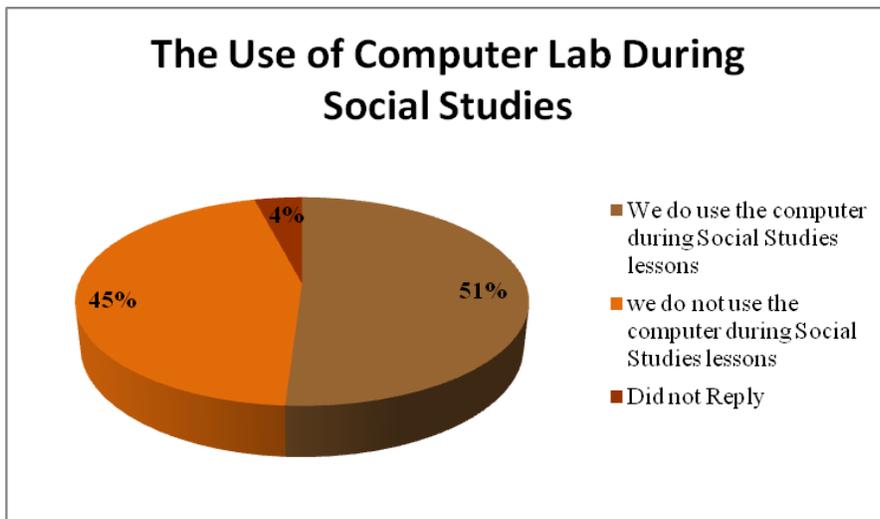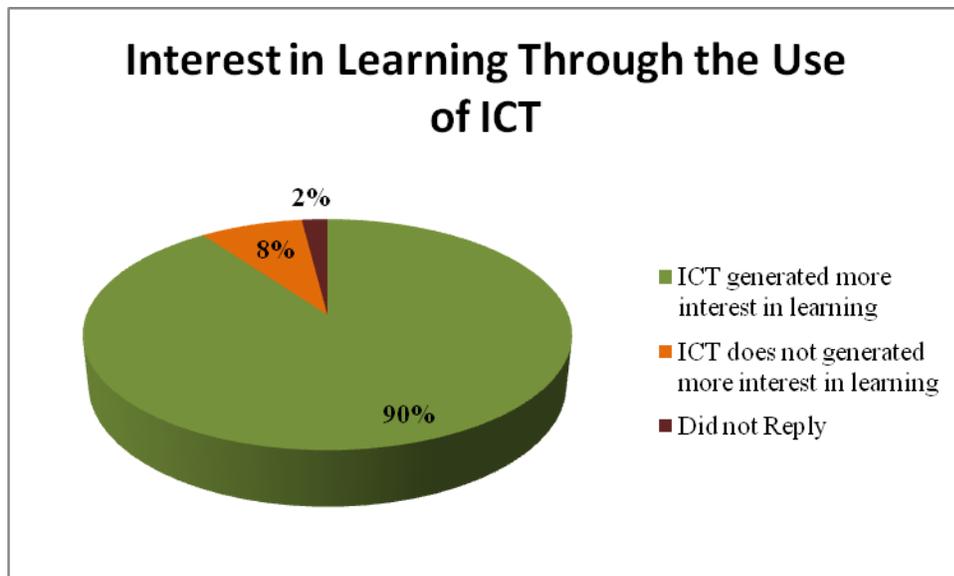

Chart 4a

The reasons why they have been taken to the lab were the following: to make the lesson through the use of PowerPoint Presentations, to watch a video clip related to the lesson, to listen to a song, to make use of the Internet, and to search for information related to the lesson. Graph 4e shows that the majority agreed that the most persisting reason was to make the lesson through the use of PowerPoint Presentation.
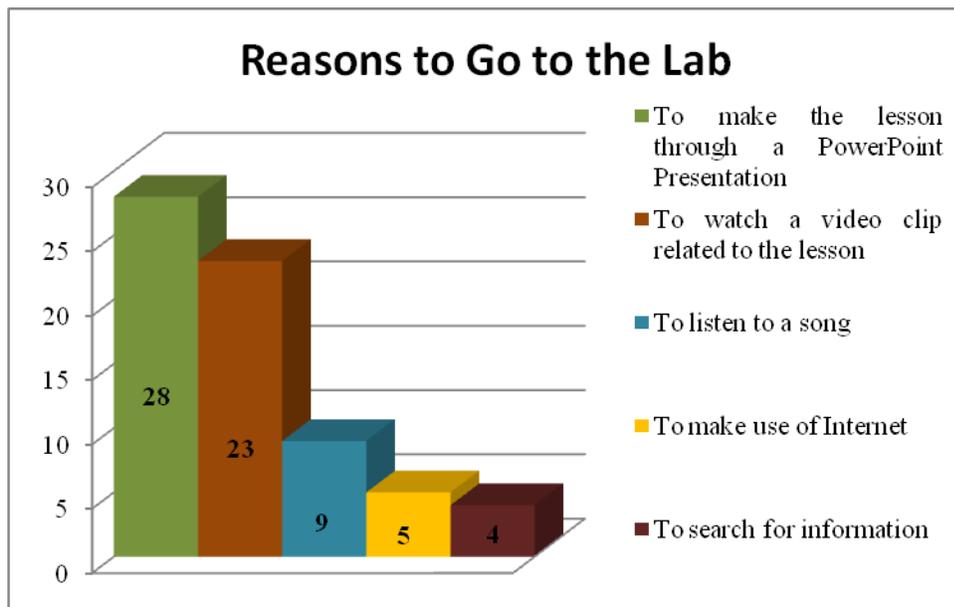
Graph 4e

So here we have to agree with what Whitworth and Berson (2003) said when they stated that computers and computer labs do have an immense impact on the Social Studies lesson, and this in view of the students' assertion that they do enjoyed the lesson much more when they were taken away from traditional modes of learning. In fact, the very large majority of the students interviewed, that is ninety percent of the students, agreed that these types of lessons does created a lot of interest in them because they felt somewhat in control over their own learning (please refer to chart 4b).

Chart 4b

In the light of this, one have to say that what Pelgrum and Law (2003) said about the introduction of micro-computers in schools is still very much valid seven years later, even in our country. The students said that there are a myriad of reasons as to how to use a computer during a Social Studies lesson. Among the answers they gave were, that computers could be used to watch a video clip related to the lesson, to listen to a song related to the lesson, to watch a PowerPoint Presentation supporting the teacher's lesson, to search for information on the Internet during a lesson, to fill up a worksheet related to a PowerPoint Presentation, for online quizzes, for activities such as games, and to create role plays related to a Social Studies lessons.

In relation to what Law et al (2008) said, in front of these reasons, one have to agree that in a world at which students are all the time exposed to the media, one have to think of related activities and modes of teaching in order to generate on one's own students interest and

motivation. In addition, the students would also feel in control over their own learning and teachers would be creating critical and active minds.

4.4 Language's Problem?

Pelgrum and law (2003) argued that although students are drawn to activities that are related to their daily life, such as the Internet, accessing such information is not always easy. This together with educational software is not always available in the native language of the students.

In relation to this, the students were asked whether this affects their learning or not. As is clearly seen in chart 4c hereunder, the majority, that is, fifty four percent of the students agreed that it makes no difference for them if the information found on the Internet or the software to study Social Studies is not in Maltese, even though the subject in Malta is being taught in the Maltese language.
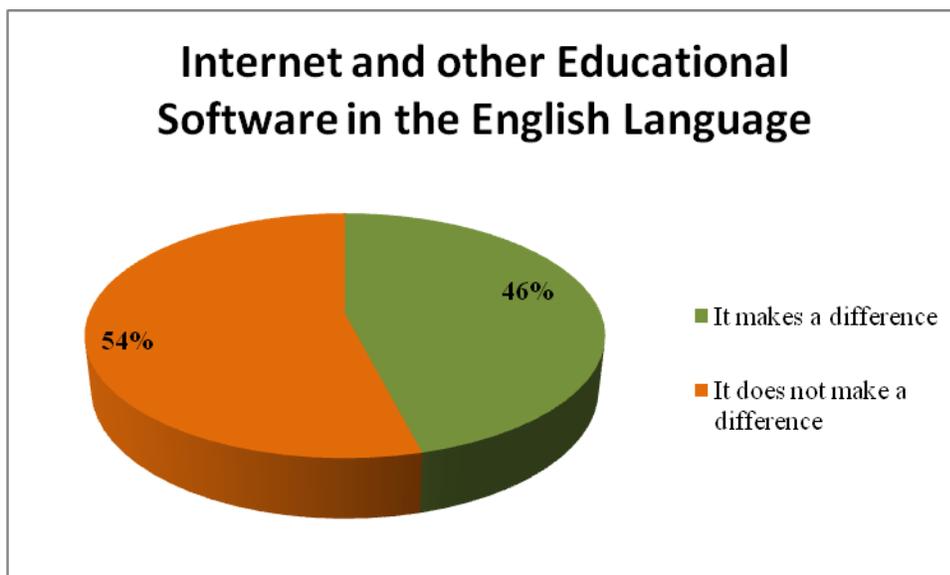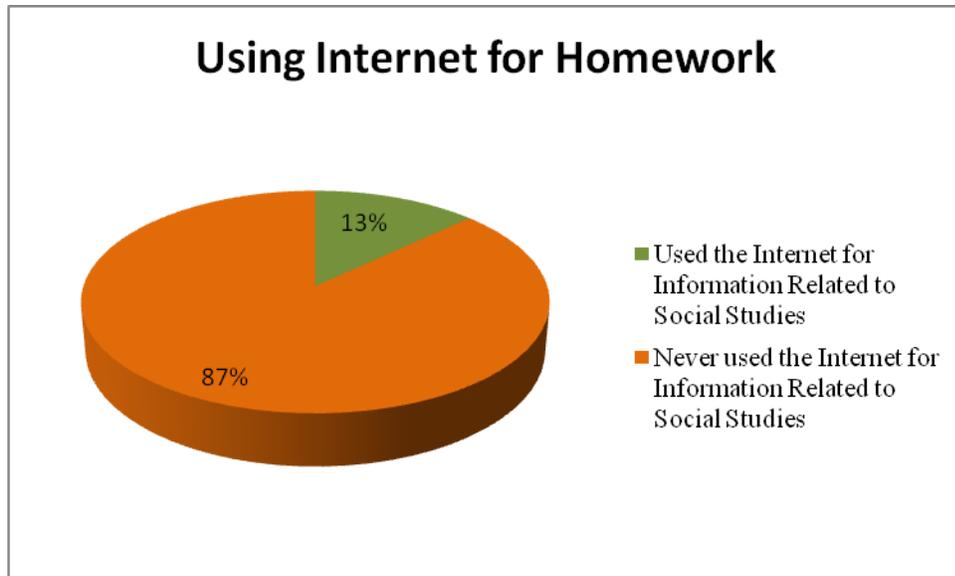

Chart 4c

However, as professionals, we should also take into consideration the forty six percent who stated that it would somehow create a problem for them if the software or information is not in Maltese. Although these are in the minority, it represents nearly half of this study's respondents.

So here, to a certain extent, we have to agree with Pelgrum and law (2003) when they stated that educational software, together with the access of the Internet in a language that is not Maltese, does effect our students' motivation to learn.

4.5 The use of Internet with Homework

Up till now, we have been speaking about the use of ICT during Social Studies lessons. We should also take a look at the use of ICT where homework is concerned. Frederick (1999) stated that the Internet opened the way to an enormous range of resources. In fact, it has been described by Whitworth and Berson (2003) as the most effective tool in technology where Social Studies is concerned. However, in spite of all the benefits that the Internet brought with it, and although this tool is being spoiled by teachers, to a certain extent, the majority of the students interviewed, that is, eighty seven percent, claimed that they do not use the Internet at home whatsoever in relation to the Social Studies lesson, even though, the syllabus is very much related to what happens around us every day (see chart 4d).

Using Internet for Homework

13%

■ Used the Internet for
Information Related to
Social Studies

■ Never used the Internet for
Information Related to
Social Studies

87%

Chart 4d

Chart 4d above clearly shows that only thirteen percent of the students go home after the lesson and make use of the Internet in relation to what has been taught during the day at school. These students were asked the reasons for using the Internet at home. Chart 4e hereunder reveals that these students use the Internet to watch video clips related to the lesson, to search for information related to the lesson, to search for information about the European Union, and to search for information about the world of work.
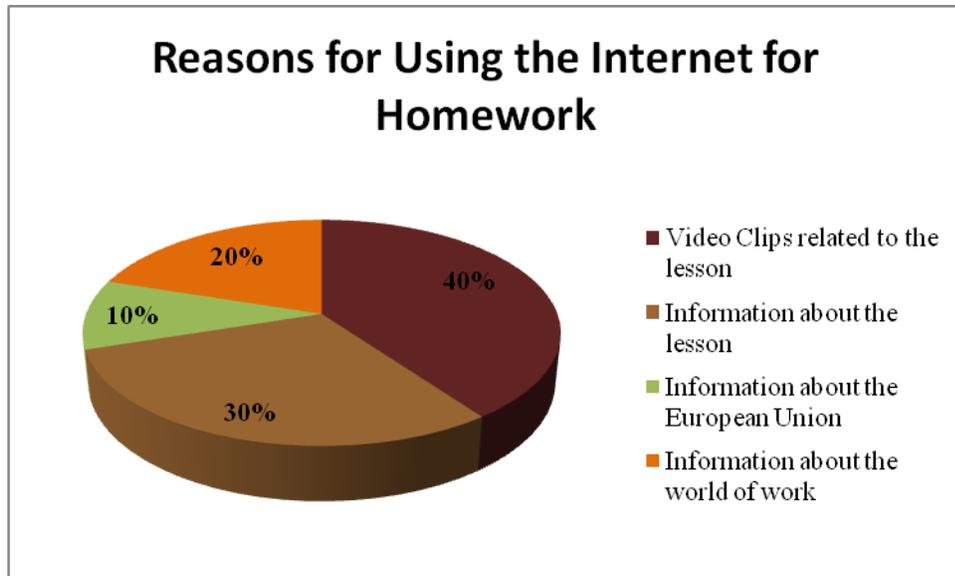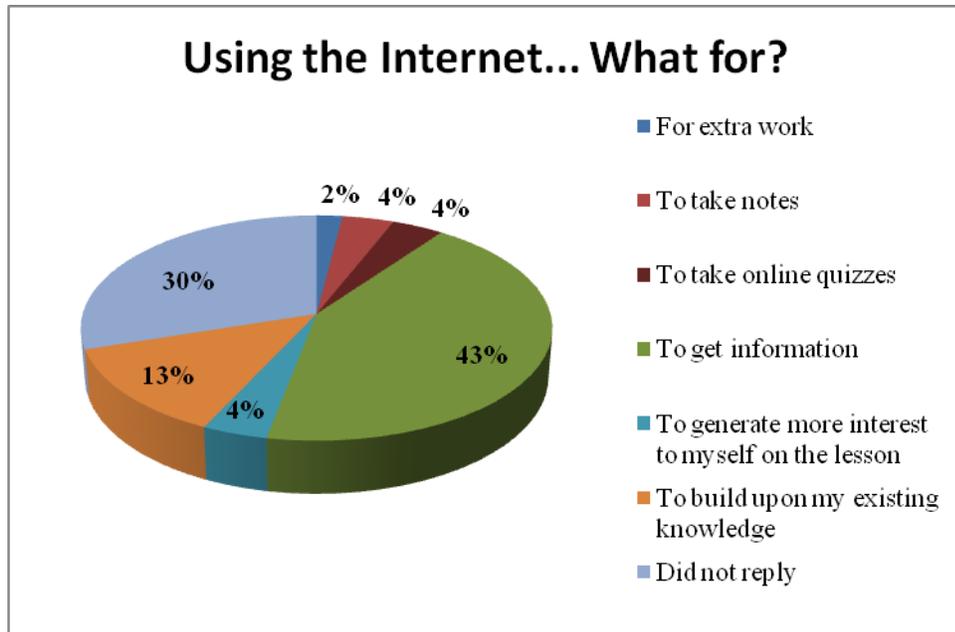
Chart 4e

In spite of the fact that the majority of the students do not use the Internet for homework, the majority of them, that is, fifty eight percent, however, agreed with Whitworth and Berson (2003) that the Internet could help them in understanding the lesson more profoundly and would make them become active participants in an increasing interactive world, as chart 4f is illustrating.
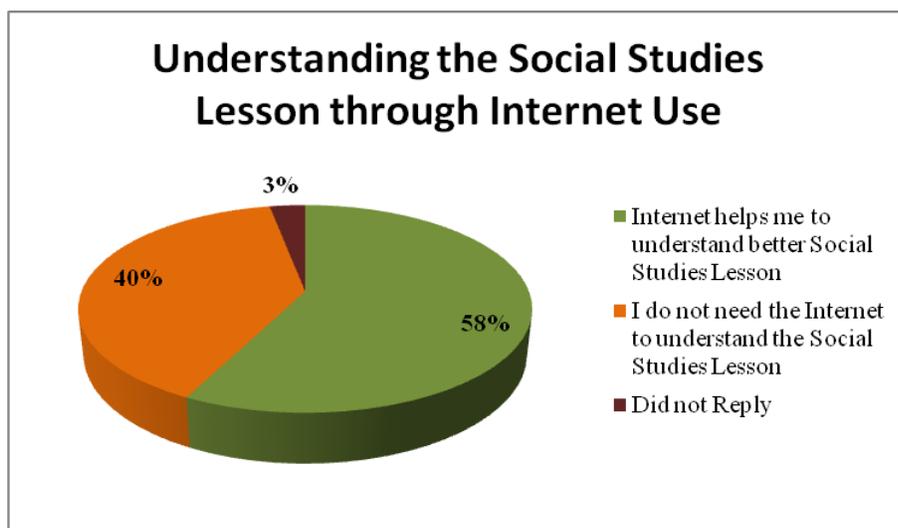
Chart 4f

Asked in what ways they could spoil the Internet for their own benefits, the fifty eight percent who said that the Internet could be beneficial to them said that it could help them with extra work, to take notes, to take online quizzes, to get information about the lesson, to generate more interest on the lesson, and to build upon their existing knowledge (see chart 4g).
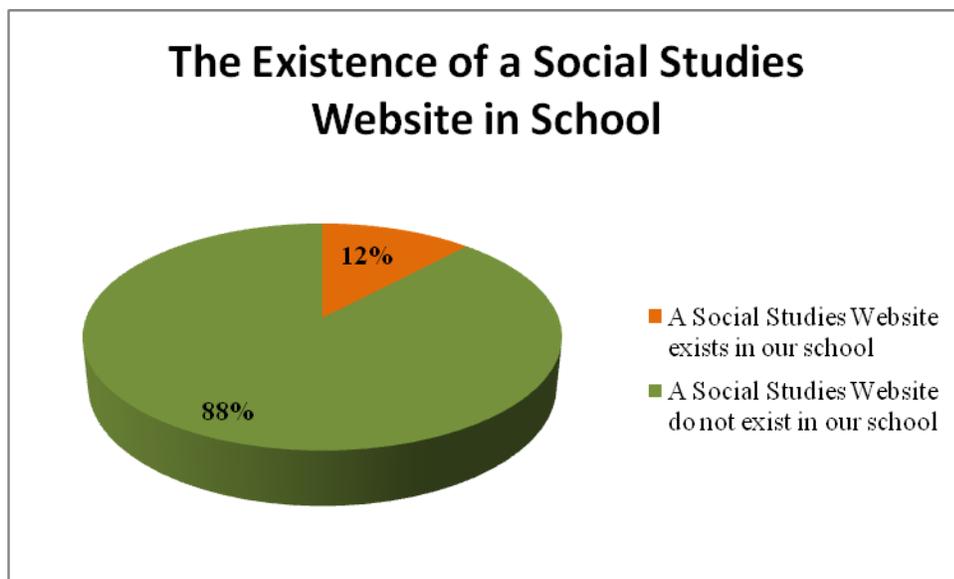

Chart 4g

At this point, and in agreement with Whitworth and Berson (2003), I would reiterate, that in my opinion, teachers should not only make use of this very much important tool in schools during lessons, but they should encourage their students to realise the importance and the benefits of such tool and start using it themselves, even when they are at home. In fact, the majority of the students are aware of its importance, even though they do not use it at all.

**4.6 The Importance of a Social Studies Website in schools**

Related to this very much important tool, are the websites. Fredrick (1999) with the support of whitworth and Berson (2003) asserted that one of the best ways to enhance learning is by creating a subject's website. Worrying however is the fact that three out of the four schools interviewed do not have a Social Studies website at all. In fact, chart 4h reveals that only twelve percent of the students interviewed agreed that they are aware of a Social Studies website in their school.
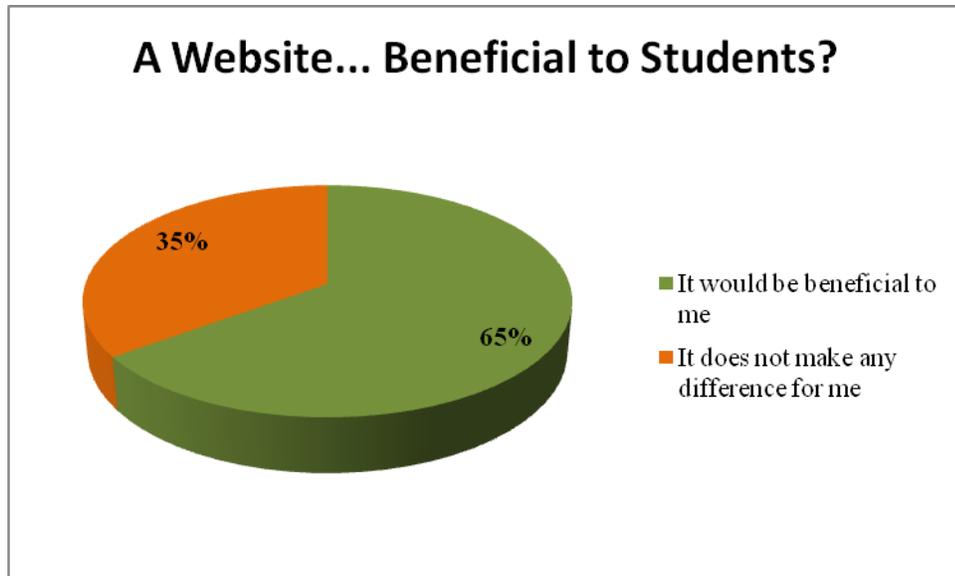

Chart 4h

On the other hand, where such website does exist, the majority of the students does not know about it or does not use it. In fact, only one student claimed to make use of such important resource. The others stated that they are either not interested on the website and the subject, or it has never crossed their mind to use such a tool, or they do not know how to use it, or they have never came across the need of making use of the school's Social Studies Website, as chart 4i illustrates.

In my opinion, having a subjects' website is important. However, it is equally important to make the students aware of such a tool and make them know how to make good use of it. Lacking these two important factors is like having no website at all.
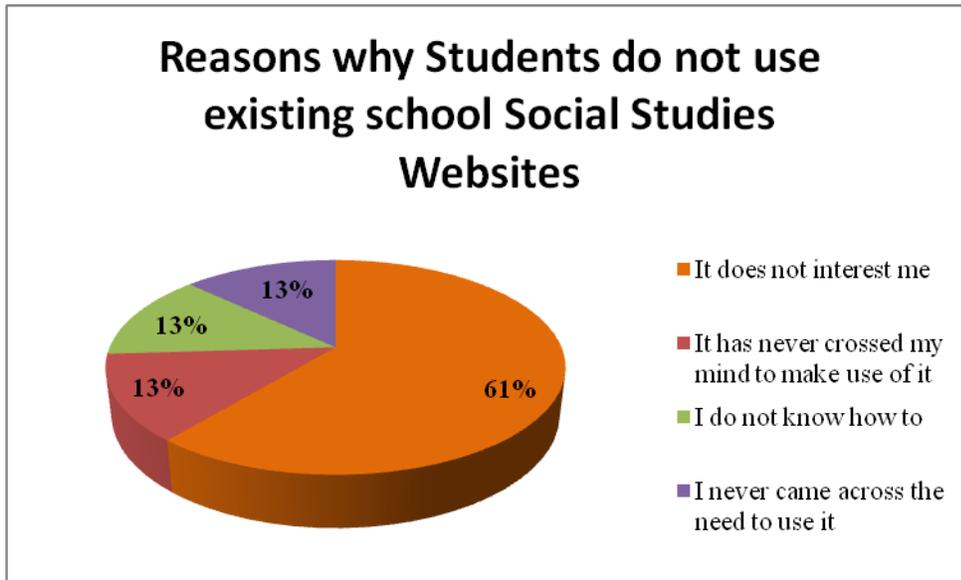

Chart 4i

Chart 4j hereunder shows that the majority of the students, that is, sixty five percent, who said that there is no Social Studies website in their school agreed with Fredrick (1999) and Whitworth and Berson (2003) when they asserted that it would definitely help them if their teacher decides to upload a Social Studies website in future.

Chart 4j

Asked in what ways such website could help these students, they gave the following reasons which are also highlighted in graph 4f hereunder: to gather notes, to send an e-mail to their teacher when they come across a difficulty in their homework, to print worksheets, to use links suggested by the teacher that are related to various lessons, to research information, to check on homework, to browse on current affairs, to check homeworks' due dates, and to study.
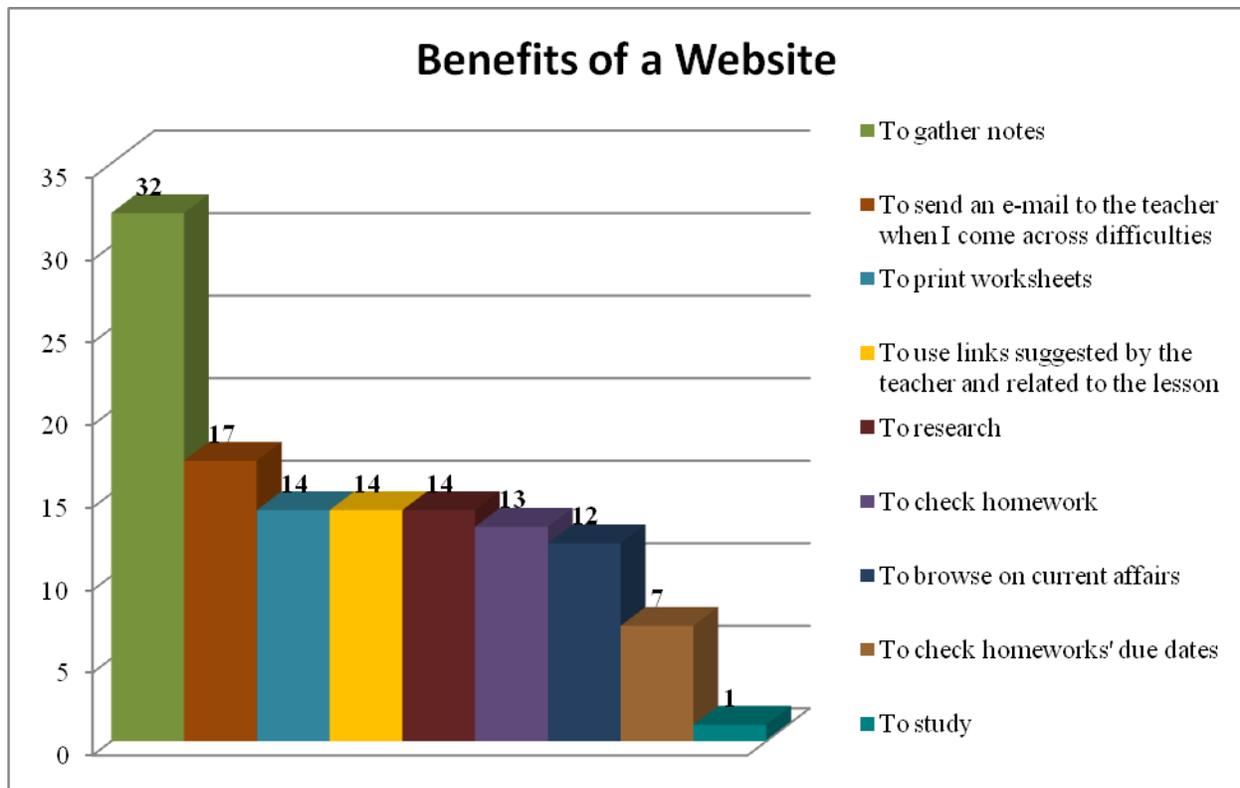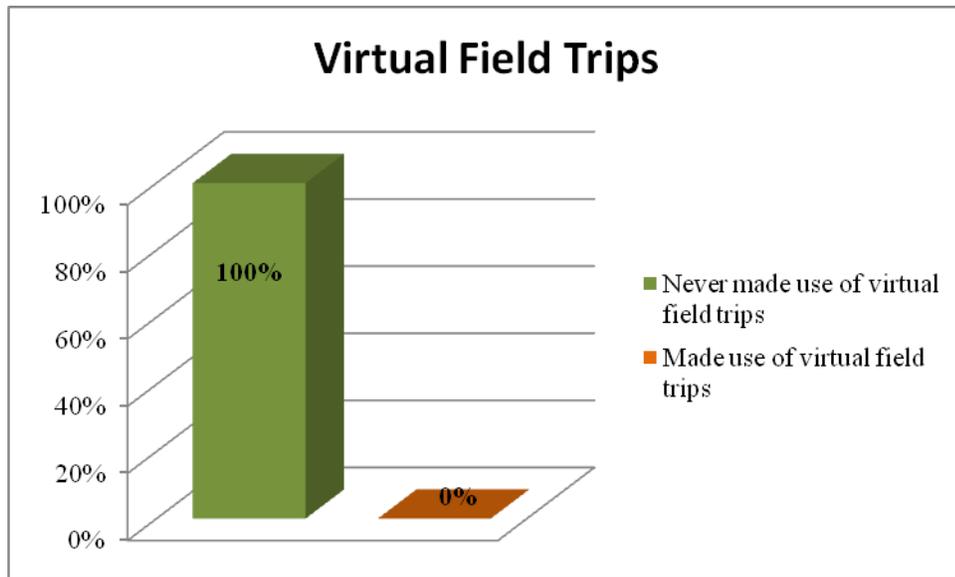
Graph 4f

So here, although we are agreeing with Whitworth and Berson (2003), to some extent, we have to criticise what they said when they asserted that nowadays there is a growing emphasis on teachers to create their own subjects' website. Definitely, from the findings drawn in this study, this is not the case in Malta!

4.7 Virtual Field trips

Creating a subject's website is only one way of using the Internet. According to Fredrick (1999), another way of using this very much important tool is, by making use of virtual field trips. It seems like this tool is widely used by teachers in other countries but definitely not in Malta. In fact, as graph 4g hereunder is illustrating, all the students under study agreed that they have never

been on a virtual field trip that is related to Social Studies before. Some of them do not even know what a virtual field trip is.


Graph 4g

So it seems like in Malta we are not using what Fredrick (1999) together with Whitworth and Berson (2003) referred to as an "*explosion of a variety of virtual tour sites*" (p. 473).

The students were then asked to give reasons as to why they have never made use of such a resource. The majority, that is, fifty one percent of the students claimed that they never took a virtual field trip because they had never been asked to do so and have never been directed by their teacher. Others said that they prefer to go in person rather than take the virtual field trips on their computer.

In my opinion, and in agreement with Pelgrum and Law (2003) and mason et al (2000), we have to make sure that teachers are aware of the various ways by which they could use ICT in general and the Internet in particular. This could definitely be ensured when conducting in service courses at the beginning and at the end of each scholastic year.

4.8 Online Risks

Throughout this whole chapter we discussed the various possible ways by which we can enhance our students' learning. However, we have to be aware of the risks that the Internet brings with it. Mason et al (2000) together with Whitworth and Berson (2003) claimed that there are various risks associated with the Internet. This has also been agreed by the students taking part in this study. In fact, as chart 4k hereunder illustrates, twenty seven percent of the students claimed that they have, at least ones, come across some form of risk when using the Internet for educational purposes
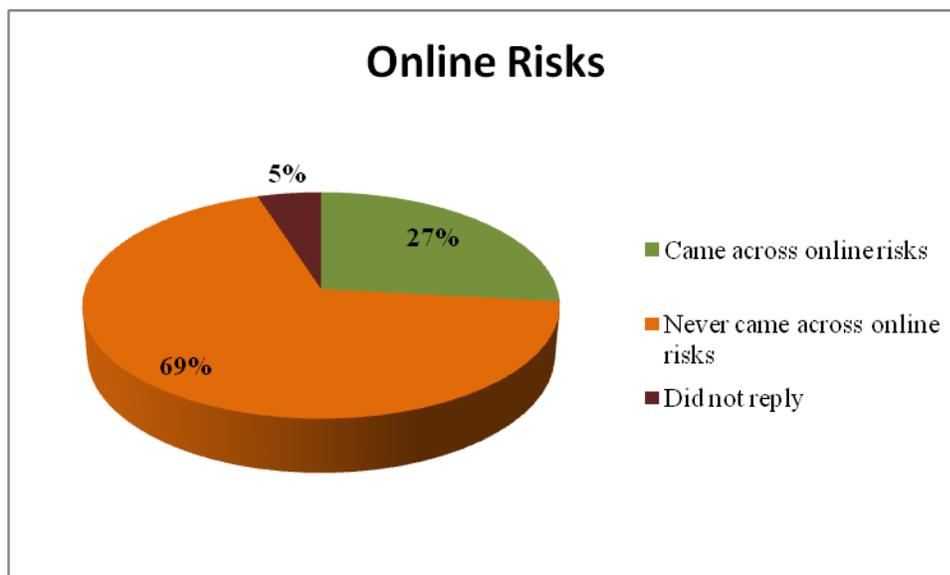
Chart 4k

They totally agreed with Whitworth and Berson (2003) when they stated that amongst the risks that they come across were inappropriate sites and images, and websites with false or inaccurate information.

4.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, it has been revealed that although nowadays we are all the time asked to make use of IT during our lessons, there is still a way to travel for the inclusion of such resource in our every day lessons. Although teachers are making use of such resource, however, they still need to work harder in order to integrate it completely to the curriculum, where class work and homework are both concerned. On the other hand, persons from the education division needs to make sure that teachers are aware of the myriad ways by which they could use the multimedia available in a given time.

By this, I would now come to the final chapter which would deal with some recommendations that came out of this study, together with the conclusion of this work.

Chapter 5
Recommendations and Conclusions

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter has revealed that although teachers, especially Social Studies teachers, are all the time being asked to move away from the traditional way of teaching and make more use of 'modern' ways of teaching, however, there are still a number of factors which has to be taken into consideration. Although the majority of the teachers are moving away from the traditional way of teaching, however, they still need to work hard in order to include more modern teaching strategies including the use of ICT, in their daily teaching. One has to keep in mind that if we want our students to succeed in learning, we need to create methods of teaching that draw them to our learning. Motivation is a very important factor in teaching and learning and what could motivate our students most?

This chapter will be dealing with what has to be done in relation to the Social Studies lesson and the conclusions of this study.

5.1 Recommendations

Although in a minority, the previous chapter revealed that forty two percent of the students that were interviewed did not like the subject as much. In my opinion, this is a cause for worry. It would make no sense to be happy because the majority like the subject. We need to draw more students to our subject and therefore we need to talk with these students and find out what motivates them most and then discuss things with the Social Studies teachers, in order to implement what the students want.

Hopeful is however the fact that the majority of students who said that they do not like the subject, said that there are factors, that if taken into consideration, the lesson would be much more interesting, hence more motivating and more fun. What are these factors?

5.1.1 Create in them love for the subject

For motivation to take place, one has to first and foremost love what s/he is doing. It is important to create in our students love for our subject which than will result in them participating and enjoying the lesson much more.

The teachers should show their enthusiasm in teaching the subject. They should enter the classroom with a smile on their face; happy that they are meeting their students and that they are teaching this subject. As soon as a teacher enters a classroom, the students would realise whether the teacher is prepared and more so whether s/he feels enthusiastic about teaching the subject and about meeting them.

5.1.2 Participation in the lesson

This is not enough. The students should also feel part of the lesson. Constructivism argues that in a constructivist classroom, teachers have to take the side and students have to work to build upon their existing knowledge. The teacher is there to guide the students and not to feed information onto them.

As teachers, we should create different activities, most of them which involves the multimedia, and make our students work either in groups or on their own. We should create an environment

where students will be looking forward for our lesson in an environment where competition does not exist.

5.1.3 The use of ICT during the Social Studies Lesson

A way of doing this is through the use of ICT. The previous chapter has revealed that students enjoy the lesson more when the teacher includes multimedia in his/her lesson. Being a video clip, a song, a lesson in the computer lab, an interactive PowerPoint Presentation or an online quiz, the students would enjoy the lesson much more than they do when the teacher use traditional modes of teaching.

From what has been drawn from this study, students would enjoy the lesson much more if the teacher show them a video clip related to the lesson or make them listen to a song in the beginning of the lesson. Interactive PowerPoint Presentations would definitely make the students in control over what they are learning especially if the teacher allows the students to work on the PowerPoint Presentation through a worksheet, either on their own or in groups.

It would definitely draw the students to the lesson and would make them want to participate more because they are doing something with multimedia, a phenomenon which has accompanied them since their early years.

5.1.4 Encouragement from the teacher

It is not enough to make use of ICT at school. Teachers, especially Social Studies teachers, should make sure that their students make use of such important resource even at home. The Internet has a myriad of information which could be relevant to Social Studies and would make

good sense if we encourage our students to find a current affair and share it with their friends at the first five minutes of each lesson.   More than this, it would also make sense if we allocate homework which could be done by using the Internet.

5.1.5 A Social Studies Website

Another important way of using the Internet is by having a Social Studies website. Teachers should be encouraged to create a Social Studies website or a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) from which students could gather information, contact their teachers and their friends, discuss and learn.

In creating a Social Studies Website or a VLE, teachers should make sure that all students are aware of the website and/or the VLE and that they have full knowledge on how to use such thing.

5.1.6 Awareness from the Education Department

The education department is the place from which teachers are urged to make use of ICT. However, this department should be aware that teachers have full knowledge on how to use the various ICT activities to accompany them throughout the scholastic year in teaching Social Studies. This could best be ensured through the various in service courses that takes place at the beginning and/or at the end of each scholastic year. Teachers, especially Social Studies teachers, should be encouraged to take courses related to ICT.

5.1.7 Awareness of Online Risks

Using ICT ourselves in class and encourage our students to do so at home is what everyone believe is the best way of teaching in today's modern world. However, we have to make our

students aware of the various online risks that exist when browsing the Internet. We should be open with our students and let them know of the various risks that exist in the cyber world and let them know how to deal with such issues if they ever come across any of them.

5.2 Conclusion

The above are some of the recommendations that came out of this study.

In my opinion, and from my own experience, creating lessons with ICT would definitely be motivating to students, even to the ones who do not like technology at all. Obviously, teachers have to make sure that they know how to make good use of ICT in relation to a given lesson. In service courses has served to help teachers a great deal and I would recommend Social Studies teachers to go for courses that has to do with ICT. Social Studies is a very vast subject and enters into every aspect of our everyday life. Definitely Social Studies teachers would not find it a problem to integrate this tool in each and every lesson in all age groups of secondary education.

One has to really dig into what these respondents said about Social Studies and the use of ICT, especially Internet and PowerPoint Presentation and work on what they have said. After all, we know the subject and we love it. We need to instil in our students a love for this subject as well. To do so, we need to deliver lessons that they really like and enjoy doing. The students in this study gave us a myriad of hints how they prefer Social Studies lessons to be delivered. It is up to us now to integrate what they had suggested in our everyday practices. I would reiterate that since the media is a very powerful tool and since it is highly present in our students' daily life, we definitely need to use it to make sure that motivation in Social Studies takes place.

Although this study has revealed that ICT is being slowly introduced in Social Studies, however, there is still a way to travel for the complete integration of such tool in our everyday teaching and learning. As teachers, it is up to us to make it happen and make our students enjoy the subject more, and hence love our subject!