NURTURING DIGITAL COMPETENCY IN TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES VIA CONTEMPORARY ISSUE AWARENESS

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In the digital age, education has evolved significantly, demanding that educators not only impart knowledge but also equip students with the skills to navigate the digital landscape. This transformation is particularly pertinent for social studies teachers tasked with engaging students in the complex world of contemporary issues. Digital competency, in this context, signifies the ability to effectively use digital tools and resources to access, evaluate, and communicate information regarding social, political, and cultural phenomena (Ilomäki et al., 2011). This competency enhances the learning experience and prepares students to be well-informed and engaged citizens in a world dominated by digital technology (Vodă et al., 2022).

Contemporary issues are at the core of social studies education. These issues, encompassing a broad spectrum of topics, including climate change, social justice, global politics, and health crises, serve as a bridge to real-world relevance in the classroom. Teaching contemporary issues is crucial for fostering students' understanding of the world around them and nurturing their critical thinking skills. It empowers them to become informed and active contributors to society, armed with the knowledge and digital competency to engage with the complex issues of our time.

Educators should focus on several strategies to develop digital competency in teaching social studies. First and foremost, they need to master digital tools and platforms to effectively access, evaluate, and use online resources related to social studies topics. Cultivating media literacy is paramount to help students critically assess online sources, identify bias, and distinguish reliable information from misinformation. In addition,

teachers should incorporate a variety of digital resources, such as online articles, videos, podcasts, and interactive websites, to make contemporary issues come to life in the classroom. Online discussions and debates are essential in promoting active participation and critical thinking, and students should be encouraged to explore different perspectives on these issues. Furthermore, connecting with experts and guest speakers through digital means offers students diverse viewpoints and insights. Creating a digital classroom environment and employing digital assessment methods are also effective strategies for fostering digital competency and enhancing contemporary issue awareness among students.

Indeed, nurturing digital competency in teaching social studies, mainly when focusing on contemporary issues, is vital for preparing students to be well-informed, critical, and engaged citizens in our digital age. It bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world application by empowering students to explore, evaluate, and actively participate in discussions related to contemporary issues. By equipping them with the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the modern world and become active contributors to positive change, educators ensure that students are educated about contemporary issues and capable of addressing them with digital proficiency and informed perspectives. Ultimately, digital competency in teaching social studies fosters contemporary issue awareness and produces a generation of global citizens ready to tackle the challenges of our times.

References:

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