



SOCIAL STUDIES AS A TOOL FOR PEACE EDUCATION AND NAVIGATING CURRENT REALITIES IN NIGERIA

By

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Article History

Received: 01/01/2025

Accepted: 04/01/2025

Published: 06/01/2025

Vol – 3 Issue – 1

PP: - 01-10

Abstract

This paper examines the critical role of Social Studies education in addressing Nigeria's contemporary challenges and fostering national development through Peace Education. It argues that Social Studies, when effectively implemented, can equip citizens with the necessary skills and understanding to navigate complex socio-economic and political realities. The paper explores how the Social Studies curriculum can be leveraged to address pressing issues such as inequality, climate change, weak governance, and social conflict, which impede Nigeria's progress. Recognizing the importance of preparing learners for the 21st century, the study emphasizes the integration of key skills, including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, into Social Studies pedagogy. These skills are deemed essential for nurturing responsible and engaged citizens capable of contributing to peaceful and sustainable development. The paper advocates for transformative teaching approaches that prioritize Peace Education, promote cultural tolerance and understanding, and empower learners to effectively engage with and positively impact Nigeria's complex social landscape. Ultimately, the paper concludes with specific recommendations for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to enhance Social Studies education and its contribution to peacebuilding and national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Peace Education, Social Studies Curriculum, 21st-Century Skills, Socio-Economic Realities, National Development

INTRODUCTION

The field of Social Studies, despite facing initial debates and varying interpretations regarding its purpose and scope, is widely recognized by educators and practitioners as a crucial instrument for positive societal transformation in Nigeria (Zevin, 2015). This discipline is not merely a collection of historical facts or geographical data; it is viewed as a dynamic force capable of shaping the attitudes, behaviors, and values of citizens, ultimately aligning them with the overarching national goals and aspirations. Social Studies education aims to cultivate responsible citizenship by fostering critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and a deep understanding of social, political, and economic systems (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2010). This perspective is supported by the study of Wali-Essien (2015) and Edinoh & Wali-Essien (2023), who emphasize the role of Social Studies in promoting acceptable societal values and equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to actively participate in and contribute to their communities.

This study subsequently turns its attention to the complex challenges confronting Nigeria in the 21st century. These challenges, spanning economic instability (Central Bank of Nigeria [CBN], 2023), social inequalities (Oxfam International, 2021), and political complexities (Ake, 1996), underscore the urgent need for intervention from various sectors, particularly educational institutions. Nigeria's position as the "giant of Africa," a title earned due to its substantial population and economic potential, is juxtaposed with the realities of these challenges. According to Worldometer, Nigeria's current population stands at 226,237,119. While this large population represents a significant human resource, it also presents complex developmental challenges related to resource management, infrastructure development, and social service provision (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022). These realities impact Nigeria's progress across various sectors and necessitate immediate and concerted efforts from relevant bodies, including a revitalized and responsive education system.

In response to these numerous and diverse challenges, this study advocates for the adoption and implementation of

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improved and more effective methods of teaching and learning Social Studies at all levels of education. Drawing upon the research of Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2012), this study emphasizes the critical need for a transformative shift in Social Studies education. This transformation should ensure that the curriculum and pedagogical approaches are relevant to Nigeria's contemporary needs, reflect its unique aspirations, and resonate with the lived experiences of its citizens (Dewey, 1986). The call is for an educational approach that promotes holistic socio-intellectual development, nurturing not only academic skills but also social and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2020). This approach must be aligned with the overall developmental needs and adjustments required of Nigerian citizens in the 21st century, thereby highlighting the significant implications for Peace Education. By equipping learners with these tools, Peace Education empowers them to navigate the complexities of contemporary society, address social injustices, and build harmonious relationships across different groups. Furthermore, this study underscores the importance of addressing and satisfying the fundamental needs and aspirations of the Nigerian people as a crucial pathway to achieving lasting peaceful coexistence among its diverse populations and moving closer to the realization of Nigeria's national goals and development objectives (Ekpenyong et al., 2023; & Wali-Essien, 2020; Maslow, 1943).

CONCEPTS CLARIFICATION

Social Studies curriculum

Social Studies education by its nature avails teachers and learners the opportunity of making use of available resources found around the school and the communities to help achieve its objectives. Social Studies is a branch of study that bothers on studying people's behaviour, attitude, development and relationships established as a result of constant interaction with physical, political, economic and social structures of what makes up human existence (Dhandhanian, 2019, 2).

Social Studies makes man appreciate the inter-relatedness of all these aspects of human existence and for this reason, must endeavour to learn how to respond to each and every of these structures to ensure their sustainability for a better society. The adoption of Social Studies education at all levels of learning in Nigeria clearly signifies its importance in the formation of a better society. The usefulness of Social Studies education to societal development is further buttressed by Arostar (2013) in Damar (2019). According to the author:

Social Studies education integrates concepts, ideas and theories from the social science subjects to enable man incorporate all aspects of reforms and innovations that are geared towards the sustenance of educational and cultural values, goals and the knowledge and skills expected of a heterogeneous people of Nigeria who are concerned with socio-economic, political, educational and scientific and technological advancement.

The above further expresses another endowment on Social Studies which has to do with it being a problem-solving discipline that expects its practitioners to identify problems in

society and develop better ways of managing these problems. This is further emphasized in the definition of Social Studies as given by Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2015) where the authors stated that it is "an integrative field of study which endows man with the social and work skills to enable him understand his world and its problems and to rationally solve or cope with them for effective living in the society." Similarly, the National Teachers Institute (2006) defined it as the "area of curriculum designed specifically for the study of man and how his problems are solved." These submissions clearly give a good description of the nature of Social Studies education and its importance to man and the society. This area of discipline remains a viable and organized process whereby citizens are trained along the line of developing a sense of being responsible for their actions and at the same, devise means to managing circumstances around them.

The diversity in religion, language, customs, traditions, behaviour, attitude, values and personality create the need for an immediate and sustainable response to the need for the country to remain stable. This instance therefore offered the need for Social Studies to have derived its content from the fields of social sciences, humanities and sciences. In line with this, is the submission by Danladi (2005) which stated that "the contents of Social Studies organisation programmes are critically selected from social sciences, with additional content from humanities, current affairs and community activities. In essence, Social Studies curriculum should reflect directly the aspirations of the place for which it is meant."

What is accepted as Social Studies curriculum should remain a basis for redressing daily occurrences in the society that can engender societal stability. On the other hand, the curriculum should be capable of enlightening the people on the application of current skills that can help move the country and its people forward (Ekpenyong et al., 2020). In the actual sense, Social Studies curriculum being what it is should reemphasize the need to reflect the needs and aspirations of the people of Nigeria.

Peace Education

Peace Education, in this context, is defined as an educational process that imparts values, attitudes, and skills essential for effectively resolving conflicts and fostering peaceful coexistence within diverse communities (Harris & Morrison, 2012). It is a dynamic field that aims to cultivate the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary for preventing conflict, resolving disputes peacefully, and fostering a culture of peace. It goes beyond simply the absence of war or violence; it encompasses the creation of just and equitable societies where human rights are respected, and individuals can live in harmony with each other and the environment (UNESCO, 1974). It specifically emphasizes principles of nonviolence, tolerance, justice, mutual respect, and intercultural understanding. Several key principles underpin Peace Education:

- **Nonviolence:** Emphasizing the rejection of violence in all its forms, both physical and structural, and

promoting nonviolent methods of conflict resolution (Scheidel et al., 2020).

- **Human Rights:** Grounding peacebuilding efforts in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, recognizing the inherent dignity and equal rights of all individuals (United Nations, 1949).
- **Social Justice:** Addressing the root causes of conflict, such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination, and promoting social, economic, and political justice (Barash & Webel, 2021).
- **Intercultural Understanding:** Fostering empathy, respect, and understanding between different cultures, religions, and ethnic groups, promoting dialogue and cooperation (Banks, 2006).
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Recognizing the interconnectedness between human society and the environment, promoting sustainable development and ecological balance (Galtung, 1996).

In the context of Nigeria, with its diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural landscape, Peace Education is particularly crucial. It can play a vital role in addressing intergroup tensions, promoting tolerance and understanding, and building a more cohesive and peaceful society. By integrating Peace Education into the Social Studies curriculum, learners can develop the skills and attitudes necessary for constructive conflict resolution, empathy, and respect for diversity. This includes developing skills in critical thinking to analyze the root causes of conflict, communication skills to engage in constructive dialogue, and problem-solving skills to find peaceful solutions. This can also involve exploring historical and contemporary examples of peacebuilding efforts, examining the role of conflict in society, and developing a deep understanding of human rights and social justice. Peace Education within Social Studies can contribute significantly to creating a more peaceful and just society in Nigeria.

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING METHODS

Teaching method according to Mezieobi (2016) is 'a chosen systematized and ordered correct way through which the act of teaching is performed in order to accomplish the set objectives of instructions.' Social Studies education remains one of those areas of study that enjoys diverse ways of teaching. It is mandatory for Social Studies to employ various available means in imparting knowledge to learners (Wali-Essien, 2015; Ekpenyong et al., 2020; Wali, 2015). The teaching resources are very much accessible and cheap.

Teaching methods available to Social Studies education ranges from discussion, discovery, rote learning, lecture, dramatization methods to inquiry, simulation, role-play and others (detailed in chapter one). Whatever method is adopted by a teacher is worthwhile if properly channelled towards meeting the needs and aspirations of the learners in question. The resources for teaching Social Studies vary and can be drawn from resource persons made up of Social Studies practitioners and generalists, improvised materials, audio-

visual materials, historic places, agencies, organisations, school compounds and others.

The essence of instructional evaluation is also not to be undervalued when implementing Social Studies curriculum. This, according Okpa, Onocha and Oyedeji (2012) in Bassey (2017, p. 386) is a 'process of gathering valid information on attainment of educational objectives, analysing and fashioning information to aid judgment on the effectiveness of teaching or an educational organisation/programmeme/project.

Evaluation done under Social Studies comes in two basic forms namely; formative and like the name implies, assesses the learner's understanding of the subject in question while learning is ongoing. It also undertakes the responsibility of engaging students fully, obtain information on student's performance to know if the objectives are achieved and also give feedback to the teacher so as to determine if learning has actually taken place. On the other hand, students are also expected to get feedback from their teachers on their own performance (Bartleby Research). Summative evaluation which is another form of evaluation is expected to assess the level of comprehension of a subject at the end of each class session. Study.com (2020).

The essence of sources of information cannot be underestimated as it is clearly indicated here by CORWIN (2019). In social studies classroom, sources can be great motivator for students understanding. They provide opportunities for students to interact with 'real world' examples of information and the ability to use current events to understand concepts critical to their success in social studies.

These sources of information are indispensable and help to provide detailed knowledge in the areas being taught by the teachers. They also help to arouse the interest of students who thereafter depend on them to aspire in life.

CURRENT REALITIES IN NIGERIA'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SETTING

The current realities facing Nigeria stem from both national and the global world and are:

Global, regional and national inequalities- The state of inequality existing among the people of the world has been an age long event that has metamorphosed into a level of affecting almost everything that concerns the existence of the human race. It is such that nations have risen against one another to exhibit their strengths in trades, weapons of war, policies, and others. It has become a state of where developing countries are made to understand that they must succumb to the dictates of those super powered countries as regards aids required to run their countries. This same state of inequality that is being crowned as a part of man's way of life also trickles down to gender-related issues. While here, the disparity between the sexes clearly describes the female gender as not being able to handle certain positions in the governance of people and also at the home front where her

culture defines her as not having the right stand where the menfolk are. Inequality equally extends to the educational sector (especially among Africans) where the issue of religion, ethnicity, and politics have taken over the order of the day as regards admission, placement in career choice, success in examinations, appointments and others. The foregoing gives a glimpse of how the act of inequality has eaten deep into the fabrics of the human existence.

Responsible citizenship- being a responsible citizen of a country requires the exhibition of right and acceptable attitude, behaviour and values towards those acts that promote good citizenship and align with the expectations of the society one finds oneself. Nigeria, as a country has its national values that act as guides to how its citizens should function in their daily activities which in the long run, can help to promote the development of the country. And then the question of how many people know these values arises. And the answer stands at only one out of ten people being aware of these national values while a good number of the citizens operate majorly with their personal or family values. These values are also acceptable so long as they are cherished, positively impactful, and generally accepted for these are some of the criteria that are required for one to be called a responsible citizen of a country.

Climate change- this is a universal and contemporary phenomenon that is affecting the optimal productivity level of the human race in several ways. The Resource Library defines climate change as “a long-term alteration of temperature and typical weather patterns in a place. Climate change according to the author could refer to a particular location or the planet as a whole.” What is known as climate change in Nigeria at present comes in the forms of increase in temperature, land degradation, rise in sea level, pollution of water resources, destruction of aquatic lives, air pollution with soot and fumes from industrial and oil operations, extreme heat waves, excessive flooding and erosion, degradation of biodiversity, droughts, desertification, rise in sea level, and others. The resultant effects being loss of farmlands/homes/fuel/self-confidence and image, health-related infections and diseases, reduction in power supply, and others. All these put together affect the generality of Nigerians directly or indirectly. And it becomes more worrisome when records have it that over 70% of Nigerians are engaged in farming activities in both large and small scales.

Global economic system- this is a system that promotes foreign currencies at the expense of the African (Nigeria inclusive) currencies. The current reality as regards this phenomenon is that no African country is allowed to trade its natural resources in its sovereign currency in order to ensure that true values of those resources are translated into economic development and the empowerment of Africans but this is the reverse when it comes to the super power countries wanting to transact businesses with Africans. At this instance, Africans will be made to source foreign currencies/exchange to carry out these transactions that are coming from their valuable resources. With this development on ground, the

Nigeria's Naira remains valueless as the exchange rate keeps climbing.

Weak leadership and followership- The popular leadership mantra, "change begins with you," should not be interpreted as placing the onus of transformation solely on leaders. Followers, too, have crucial roles to play in national success. Effective leadership and followership are characterized by distinct qualities and responsibilities. This dynamic aligns with functionalist theory, which posits that each part of a system has a specific function contributing to the whole. The failure of any part to fulfill its role jeopardizes the entire system. In Nigeria's political landscape, deficiencies in both leadership and followership have contributed to a multitude of challenges, including corruption, lack of transparency (Transparency International, 2024), disregard for established authority, and the exploitation of religious and political divisions. No nation can thrive under such conditions. This remains the unfortunate reality in Nigeria despite the propagation of well-intentioned slogans.

Corruption. According to this author 'Nigeria could be characterized as a wealthy nation staying afloat on oil. However, the problem is that the money from oil does not flow to the people.' Corruption as defined by Transparency International (2018, p.1) 'is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It can be classified as grand, petty and political, depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs.' This act, TI clearly emphasizes “corrodes the fabric of society. It undermines people’s trust in political and economic systems, institutions and leaders. It can cost people their freedom, health, money and sometimes their lives.”

Human development- this is another glaring current reality on ground. Kalua also reiterated that ‘most of the problems facing the Nigerian economy are the reflection of the bad quality of the economic health and human development of the nation.’ There is a huge deficit in human capital development as it is in Nigeria today. The resultant effect of this action is brain-drain and no country thrives in the midst of this. Skilled man-power is needed in any country that wants to be counted among those that are making head way in the development of their countries.

The market- this portends a problem to the development of Nigeria according to the point being expressed by Kalua. According to the author,

A lack of authentic competition in the system is among the problems facing the economy. Actual capitalistic economics is guided by market forces. The self-regulating character of the market defines where one works and lives, how much one earns and what he/she is able to buy...a good market governance must work hand in hand with a healthy competition...unfortunately, Nigeria is not among the countries where these two exist in one dimension... in Nigeria the federal government has a valid monopoly of setting the price of products and other services and goods (p.1).

In the recent past (2019) the Nigerian government succeeded in closing the Nigerian land borders with neighbouring

countries of Benin Republique, Cameroun, Chad and Niger. In as much as this action to some extent is beneficial to some indigenous manufacturers, the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. One of such disadvantages is that of side-lining a part of the mandate of ECOWAS which has to do with member countries establishing effective economic relationship with one another.

Global, Regional and National insecurity- the rise in insecurity of countries around the world has taken a frustrating dimension in the country also. There are cases of cyber-crime, hacking into bank accounts, kidnapping, assassinations, prostitution, banditry, robbery and others. The list is long and the most worrisome being that of some youths being fully involved in these acts. When this is the case one then is left to ask questions on what the future holds for generations to come.

Terrorism is another glaring current reality living among Nigerians. This, according to Kalua, has 'negatively influenced the economic situation of the country.' No country survives in strangled economic, social and political instability. To some, this act is politically motivated and even when it serves as money-yielding venture to some, the wanton pains and losses it brings the country are unimaginable. Boko Haram activities over the past years gave reasons for Nigeria to be indexed by Global Peace in 2016 as occupying the 4th position among terrorists' countries. Part of its effects has also been that of disrupting schools' activities in the affected areas.

Unemployment- The rising of unemployed graduates emerging from institutions of higher learning represent a deeply troubling societal challenge, one with far-reaching and detrimental consequences. This situation has escalated to a point of serious concern, impacting not only the individuals directly affected but also the broader economic and social fabric. While a multitude of factors contribute to this complex issue, a central problem lies in the widening gap between the skills graduates acquire during their education and the evolving demands of the 21st-century workplace. Many graduates find themselves ill-equipped for the current job market, lacking the competencies that employers now consider essential. This "unemployability" stems from various skill deficits, notably in areas such as digital literacy and technological proficiency. In today's digitally driven world, fluency in various software applications, online platforms, and digital tools is no longer a niche skill but a fundamental requirement across most professions. Furthermore, the ability to think critically and solve complex problems is highly valued by employers seeking individuals who can analyze situations, identify challenges, and develop effective solutions. Strong communication and interpersonal skills are also paramount, as effective teamwork, collaboration, and clear articulation of ideas are crucial in modern work environments. The rapid pace of technological advancement and globalization necessitates adaptability and a commitment to lifelong learning. Individuals must be willing to embrace new skills, adapt to changing circumstances, and continuously update their knowledge to remain competitive. Finally, entrepreneurial skills, including the ability to identify

opportunities, take initiative, and potentially create new ventures, are increasingly sought after, even within established organizations.

The repercussions of widespread graduate unemployment are severe and diverse in nature. The most immediate and tangible effect is an increase in poverty among graduates and their families. The lack of income leads to financial hardship, impacting basic necessities and placing immense strain on family structures. Beyond the economic impact, prolonged unemployment can have profound psychological effects, leading to frustration, disillusionment, diminished self-esteem, and even mental health issues. The despair and hopelessness associated with extended periods of joblessness can drive some individuals to engage in what are termed "objectionable activities"—a euphemism for actions that may include petty crime, fraud, or other illicit pursuits born out of desperation. This not only further destabilizes society but also creates a negative cycle of social problems. Moreover, the nation suffers a significant loss of human capital when the skills, talents, and potential of these educated individuals remain untapped. Their inability to contribute to the workforce translates to lost productivity, stifled innovation, and a hindrance to overall economic growth and development.

Educational/curriculum reform- this cannot be excluded from the list of problems the Nigeria's educational system is experiencing at present. RAND Corporation views educational reform as that which "comprises any planned changes in the way a school or school system functions, from teaching methodologies to administrative processes." For instance, Social Studies as an area of study faces the challenges of inadequate teaching and learning resources, exclusion of experts input in curriculum planning, inadequate implementation of curriculum content, non-application of right teaching methods, broad scope of curriculum content that some teachers claim are difficult for them to integrate and coordinate teaching effectively. Consistent neglect of these challenges poses a great threat to the advancement of this area of study. These underlying challenges form the crux major reason why Social Studies teachers are holding on to the traditional methods of teaching which are yet to be totally abolished in the 21st century where the issue of globalization is fast taking over the activities of old. The 21st century has brought with it advancement in the ways things are done (teaching included) and the planners of Social Studies curriculum content must consider this fact and do the needful if the prospects of Social Studies are to be achieved.

Global pandemics- this is a disease described as being contagious. The list of global pandemics in human history is a long one starting from the Plague of the 6th century as recorded in the Bible and that of the 14th century (the Black Death- the Plague pandemic) that consumed millions of lives (ABC/Reuters, 2008). Aside these records, the world has experienced a good number of pandemics with that of COVID-19 of 2019 till date. Pandemic, according to the authors is an epidemic of infectious diseases that has spread across a large region, for instance multiple continents or worldwide, affecting a substantial number of individuals.

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Dunar (2009) defines it as an epidemic occurring on a scale that crosses international boundaries, usually affecting people on a worldwide scale. This occurrence heightens as there is a constant movement of people across the globe. In buttressing this Madhav, Oppenheim, Gallivan (2018) in Anagun and Oni (2020) state that 'the livelihood of pandemics has increased over the past century due to persistent increase in global travel and integration, urbanization, changes in land use, and greater exploitation of the natural environment.' Countries' socio-economic lives are worst hit whenever there is a pandemic.

In the disclosure given by the World Bank (2020) in Anagun and Oni (2020), the economic growth in the Sub-Saharan Africa as projected to decline from 2.4 percent in 2019 by a decreasing rate of -2.1 to 5.1 percent in 2020, causing the first recession in the region in 25 years while hitting hard on 3 largest economies of Nigeria, South Africa, and Angola. The economy of most developing nations encounters a shift in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as such any outbreak affects the economic strength of the nation. This circumstance according to the World Bank attracts a reform of economic policies that can address the new normal Nigerians are facing. And this cuts across every sector.

Globalization/Cultural changes- cultural values are those principles that hold a group's identity together due to the importance attached to them. Nigeria cultural values before the advent of colonialism were intact and well cherished by the people. They formed the basis of their existence as a group generation after generation. These values are at present trampled upon by the same people who inherited them from their fore parents. The changes recorded around the country range from disrespect for and the erosion of cultural values/customs, disrespect for traditional institution, incestuous act and others. There is deep disregard for those traditions that hold cultural groups as one and the effects on the generality of Nigerians are enormous. One of the causes of these changes recorded around Nigeria's cultural values is that of globalization.

Globalization, in the view of Anwuluorah and Asike (2015) "describes a process by which regional economies, societies and cultures have become integrated through a globe-spanning network of communication and trade." To these authors, "the activities of globalization are inexorable. It means that no part of the world can be taken to be an enclave anymore. There has been growing interdependence or dependence in some cases. But even mere dependence, negatively as it may sound, entails that the dependent section cannot exist or act optimally alone." And one outstanding thing that is recorded in the course of this interdependence is that of exchange of ideas, values, knowledge, skills and others. Depending on what they are, the acceptance of the above-mentioned are capable of either making or destroying the people's cultural values, customs and traditions depending on how they applied. This is further reiterated by Anwuluorah & Asike where it is stated that 'cultural values scenario in Nigeria is not far from the theatre where western education is a tool that is constantly and consistently reshaping the psyche and mentality of the people, especially the educated fellows.'

As a result of the foregoing, the people witness a great change in their ways of taking up responsibilities even when they do not fit into their background.

The current realities in the 21st century Nigeria require a sharp move from the old style of doing things to the adoption of a more practical and dynamic style of learning that can plunge the learner into walking along the path of relevance in any part of the world where he/she finds himself/herself. Boss (2019) in raising concern over the conventional, teacher-centred method of teaching and learning stated that the call for 21st century learning dates back more than two decades, when blue-ribbon committees, policy makers, business leaders, and education experts began sounding the same alarm; yesterday's focus on memorization and rote learning would not prepare students for a fast- changing, increasingly automated, information-saturated world (p.1).

The world as a whole and Nigeria as a country, are faced with series of events bothering on socio-economic and political development. The events around these structures have been sources of worry overtime now and it gets more worrisome when the perpetrators of those events that engender progress are people who partook and still partake in the learning of Social Studies.

There are better ways of teaching Social Studies Education and the 21st century is not failing to uncover them as Boss (2019) and Joshua (2017, p.19) indicated in their work that, the six 21st century skills employers want across industries. In addition, these practical skills (the 4Cs), when better applied, are capable of enabling the learning institutions produce responsible leaders and followers in the long run. They are as follow:

Critical thinking- the application of this skill is to enable learners develop a sense of being able to analyse information and also to be able to initiate new ways of managing problems. Accordingly, the authors state that this skill entails the ability to reason inductively and deductively and also be able to analyse situations appropriately to help in problem solving. Teaching Social Studies along this line can also help the learners develop a sense of understanding and analysing problems in the Nigerian society and proffer better ways of managing them. Engaging in skills that can enable one look at societal problems critically is essential if that problem is to be better handled.

Creativity- this, according to Joshua (p. 22) is the "act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality." Developing a sense of creativity can launch a learner into being proactive and help to move his organisation to better levels. Activities around organisations in the present times are highly competitive and would require employees that can match up with this trend. The world at present requires people with great ability to think creatively in managing societal problems. Social Studies Education is a problem-solving discipline and adopting this method of teaching can help learners become innovative in the manner in which they handle problems in society. Learning in itself is made

enjoyable and accommodating when this style of teaching is adopted.

Collaboration- Boss stated here that “the ability to work with others is a timeless skill, but as processes move faster and become more complex, the ability to understand others, be sensitive to their needs and find a way to work together will be more important than ever” (p.1). Similarly, National Education Association (2015) in Joshua (2017, p.21) clearly reiterated that this process undertakes the ability and willingness to promote a sense of team work by joining hands with people of diverse backgrounds to move a place forward. Responsible leaders and followers are produced in the long run when this style of teaching and learning is applied in Social Studies Education. Diverse ideas, values, and interests are exchanged and better ways of getting things done are promoted with the aid of collaborating with one another.

This is a method of teaching and learning that welcomes criticism from members of the team. Collaboration promotes a sense of oneness and empathy. Each person feels what affects a member of his team and amends are made where necessary. And these two are some of the qualities of responsible leaders and followers in any existing society. According to Mezieobi et al. (2017, p.52), this method of teaching Social Studies “gives credence to the description of the ideal school as a community of learners ... nonetheless, the grouping of students with common interest or, needs is preferred as it yields better outcomes. It is a process that promotes a sense of confidence, commitment and self-reliance in students. (Interdependent).” These qualities also define responsible leaders and followers.

Communication- this is a ‘much desired skill’ that is key to the development of any organisation. This is a skill that helps establish relationships among people. One without this skill is likened to a tree without roots. According to Joshua, exposing learners to the world of establishing viable contacts and tapping into available opportunities in the 21st century is made possible through the ability to “articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and non-verbal skills in a variety of forms and contexts” (p. 20).

Technology/media literacy- these two rules the world at present and are part of what make learning and working in the 21st century more enjoyable and realistic. In addition to this, is the submission by ISTE Standards for Students in Boss (2019) where it “highlighted digital citizenship and computational thinking as key skills that will enable students to thrive as empowered learners.” Mezieobi et al. (2017, p. 27) further states that ‘ICT facilities elicit attentive and participative commitment of the learner ... by the use of ICTs in Social Studies, the learner is no more a robot or passive recipient of knowledge from the teacher but his own learning task master.’

Passivity is one behavioural trait the 21st century learning style is obviously against. Learners of this age are expected to be part of their own learning. It is no longer the case of teacher-centeredness. They learn better and responsibly when engaged in their own learning and this helps them walk along

the path of becoming effective and efficient leaders and followers.

Leadership qualities- developing learners along the line of being able to influence those around them positively clearly depicts the requirement of a responsible leader. Understanding the qualities of a good leader is paramount in the 21st century. There is the need to unite and carry people along and this can only be made possible when one is developed along the line of possessing the qualities of an efficient and effective leadership.

THEMATIC AREAS FOR THE TEACHING OF SOCIAL STUDIES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT REALITIES IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR PEACE EDUCATION

The 21st century skills (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication) presented above can be integrated into the following thematic areas as represented in Social Studies Education curriculum content. Applying those skills to each of these themes presented below will further expose learners to better ways of managing problems in society.

Peace and conflict resolution studies

- The concept of peace and conflict.
- Reasons for conflict.
- Reasons for lingering conflict.
- Ways of managing conflict.
- Effects of conflict.
- Benefits of peace to man and society.

Problems in society;

- Cybercrime.
- Inadequate educational/curriculum reform.
- Non-supervision of schools by educational regulatory body.
- Corruption.
- Social crises among school children.
- Global pandemic.
- Erosion of cultural and national values.
- Mutual suspicion.
- Discrimination.
- Kidnapping.
- Assassination.
- Infrastructural decay.
- Abandoned projects.
- Disrespect for the rule of law.
- Climate change.
- Unemployment.
- Insecurity.
- Poverty.

Family and society;

- The concept of family and society.

- Relationship between family and society.
- Problems in family and how they affect societal development.
- Ways of restructuring the family unit.
- Value-reorientation

Politics and governance

- The concepts of politics and governance.
- Blurred expectation of achieving the SDGs
- Effects of politics on governance.
- Problem with leadership and followership.
- Restructuring politics for good governance.
- Responsible citizenship.
- Power recycling among elites.
- Cross carpeting in politics.
- Globalization and its effect on Nigerians.
- Changes in socio-economic and political structures.

The foregoing gives an insight into the extent to which themes embedded in Social Studies curriculum can help in achieving the intended goals as they concern the citizens in particular and the country as a whole. Moreover, the findings of Gbadamosi's (2018) study on 'Assessment of implementation of Social Studies themes in context of secondary school religion and national values,' revealed that non-inclusion of many teachers in Social Studies curriculum development affects social studies theme's implementation. The author opined that:

The findings imply that effective implementation of Social Studies could help to promote, love, respect, tolerance, dignity of labour etc. It is capable of solving contemporary social problems such as raping, drug abuse, cultism, examination malpractices, political apathy among others. However, there is a high level of uncertainty in the face of huge challenges confronting effective implementation of Social Studies theme under Religion and National Values curriculum. If Social Studies will take its rightful position as a problem-solving subject as encapsulated by founding fathers in its objectives, there is a lot to cover in content to meet with emerging trends of the 21st century.

In furtherance to this, Edinoh and Wali-Essien (2023) stated that Social Studies is predominantly engaged in the communication of social facts into the learners for relating awareness to the social situation and at the instance of creating awareness, the learner is now well equipped with tools to solve problems in society. In addition to these, Social Studies is handed the mandate of promoting a humanized education and to ensure a better understanding of the human environment and how man's activities affect this said-environment. Therefore, the urge for students and lecturers to take part in universities' reformation should be awakened through active curriculum content.

Implications for Peace Education

This study holds significant implications for Peace Education in Nigeria. A well-implemented Social Studies curriculum, delivered by skilled educators, has the potential to equip

learners with the tools necessary to confront contemporary challenges and mitigate the instability plaguing the nation. The Social Studies curriculum's emphasis on peace promotion, problem-solving methodologies, mutual understanding, unity in diversity, and cultural and religious tolerance directly addresses the urgent need to counter pressing issues such as insurgency, farmer-herder conflicts, Boko Haram activity, kidnapping, religious intolerance, assassinations, and pervasive mistrust.

These challenges have collectively contributed to socio-political instability, economic volatility, and heightened cultural and religious intolerance across Nigeria. To effectively address these deeply entrenched problems, the integration of 21st-century learning skills within Social Studies education is crucial. These skills, including critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, are not only relevant for analyzing and understanding current events but are also fundamental for advancing the core principles of Peace Education. For example, critical thinking allows students to deconstruct biased narratives and identify the root causes of conflict, while effective communication skills enable constructive dialogue and negotiation.

This study underscores the vital role of Social Studies educators at all levels in implementing these enhanced approaches. By integrating 21st-century learning skills into their pedagogy, educators can cultivate active and informed citizens better prepared to navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing Nigeria. This pedagogical shift empowers learners to become agents of positive change, equipped to contribute to building a more harmonious and peaceful society. In essence, the effective application of a well-designed Social Studies curriculum becomes a cornerstone in fostering the values and competencies necessary for achieving the broader goals of Peace Education in Nigeria. This approach aligns with the principles of transformative pedagogy, which emphasizes critical reflection, social action, and the development of agency in learners (Giroux, 2018). Furthermore, research suggests that integrating conflict resolution and peacebuilding themes into Social Studies can significantly improve students' understanding of conflict dynamics and their ability to engage in peaceful conflict resolution (Johnson & Johnson, 1991).

Conclusion

Reemphasizing the importance of the acquisition of relevant skills is not merely beneficial but essential for both individual and societal progress, particularly if a nation aspires to achieve international standing. Nigeria's current challenges, while significant, are not insurmountable. Equipping learners with the appropriate skills is a crucial step towards overcoming these obstacles. Social Studies, by its very nature, is uniquely positioned to play a pivotal role in this process. Its interdisciplinary nature allows it to address critical issues such as civic responsibility, ethical decision-making, conflict resolution, and economic understanding—all vital for navigating the complexities of the 21st century. However, Social Studies cannot effectively fulfill this crucial role in

isolation. The creation of an enabling environment by relevant authorities is paramount. This includes:

- **Curriculum reform:** Updating the Social Studies curriculum to reflect contemporary needs and incorporate essential 21st-century skills, such as conflict resolution, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving.
- **Teacher training and professional development:** Providing teachers with the necessary training and resources to effectively deliver the updated curriculum and utilize innovative pedagogical approaches.
- **Resource allocation:** Ensuring adequate funding and resources are allocated to support Social Studies education, including access to technology, learning materials, and infrastructure.
- **Collaboration and partnerships:** Fostering collaboration between educational institutions, government agencies, and the private sector to create opportunities for practical learning experiences, internships, and apprenticeships.

By prioritizing these measures, Nigeria can harness the transformative potential of Social Studies education to empower its citizens with the skills they need to contribute meaningfully to national development and build a brighter future.

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