

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Addressing Contemporary Societal Challenges in Nigeria through Effective Implementation of Social Studies and Civic Education Curricula

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Introduction

Addressing the various societal issues that Nigeria faces is a crucial endeavor given the country's diverse and constantly changing environment. Nigeria has a broad range of difficulties, including political instability, corruption, ethnic and religious conflicts, economic inequality, and environmental concerns. In a setting with so many facets, education—especially social studies and civic education—becomes even more important in forming responsible, knowledgeable citizens who can actively work to improve society (Fabarebo et al., 2019). In Nigeria, social studies and civic education are essential for developing the attitudes, abilities, and information required to tackle modern societal issues. These courses go beyond conventional classroom instruction and emphasize the formation of knowledgeable, involved, and socially conscious people. They offer a framework for comprehending the intricate structure, history, institutions, and civic procedures of Nigerian society (Bachen, 2015).

While civic education instills principles connected to citizenship, democracy, and civic participation, social studies education provides pupils with a comprehensive understanding of society, politics, and culture. In Nigeria, where a variety of problems are linked to social dispersion, poor governance, and a lack of civic consciousness, these academic subjects are crucial (Sandahl, 2020). Through the promotion of critical thinking, tolerance, and civic duty, social studies and civic education can empower citizens to actively engage in addressing issues that affect both their neighborhoods and the nation at large. These classes provide the foundation for acquiring the skills necessary to encourage positive change, hold fruitful discussions, and work for a society that is more equitable and peaceful (Lee et al., 2013).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how social studies, civic education, and Nigeria's current societal issues interact. This chapter will take readers on a historical tour of the development of these academic fields in Nigeria, assess the magnitude of the issues currently plaguing the country, and analyze the barriers standing in the way of their successful application. In addition, the chapter will close with some helpful advice and ideas for improving civic education and social studies' ability to handle these issues. The history of social studies in Nigeria is outlined, along with its key figures and contributions to the formation of civic consciousness. explores the core of the issue, presenting the various modern societal issues that Nigeria faces with the support of copious amounts of data, case studies, and research. uses the body of existing research and the opinions of experts to illuminate the difficulties and obstacles that come with implementing civics and social studies instruction. The chapter ends with a summary of the most important lessons learned and a focus on the role that education plays in tackling societal issues. useful advice and ideas, including possible legislative modifications, resource distribution, and community involvement tactics. This chapter's thorough investigation seeks to offer insightful analysis and new viewpoints to educators, decision-makers, and other stakeholders who are committed to improving Nigerian society. Together, we can harness the transformative power of social studies and civic education to produce citizens who are better informed, involved, and proactive, equipped to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

The Emergence of Social Studies Education

The origins of social science the history of education in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era. During this time, the main goal of education was to create obedient laborers, and British colonial policies had a big influence on the curriculum. The curriculum's scope was limited, and subjects related to local cultures, political systems, or social dynamics received minimal emphasis (Salako et al., 2013). During the mid-20th century Nigerian independence movement, there was a significant turning point in both education and history. As the nation moved closer to self-governance, the need for a more modern and comprehensive educational system grew. Indigenous knowledge, values, and traditions were aimed to be incorporated into the curriculum in the early stages of social studies development (Akanbi & Jekayinfa, 2019).

The 1969 curriculum revision stands out as a significant turning point in the history of social studies education in Nigeria. This revision sought to better align the curriculum with the requirements of Nigerian society by introducing social studies as a separate topic. The method was multidisciplinary in nature, incorporating aspects of civics, geography, history, and sociology (Akanbi & Jekayinfa, 2021; Akanbi & Shittu, 2021). The National Policy on Education, which was implemented in 1981, reinforced the significance of social studies by highlighting its role in fostering national cohesion, civic awareness, and sustainable development. This strategy established the groundwork for a curriculum that is more thorough and progressive (Ross, 2020). Further curricular changes have been made in the years that have followed with the goal of modifying social studies to address modern concerns. These changes were intended to improve civic education, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities (Adu, 2021).

In Nigeria, social studies are ideally situated to be crucial in forming civic consciousness and advancing the country's development. It uses a number of techniques to achieve this. Social studies instills civic ideals and encourages active engagement in the democratic process by teaching pupils about the rights and duties of citizenship. It gives pupils the information and abilities they need to participate in civic life (Damanhuri & Lestari, 2021). Education in social studies recognizes Nigeria's multifaceted cultural environment. In a nation where there are many distinct ethnic and religious groups, it fosters tolerance, understanding, and appreciation of many cultures, all of which are essential for social cohesiveness (Salako, 2013). Social studies offers a means of tackling modern-day societal problems such economic inequality, corruption, and problems with governance. It gives students the tools they need to evaluate these problems critically and work toward change (Dorgu et al., 2018).

A comprehensive social studies program helps to create knowledgeable, involved citizens who can actively contribute to the advancement of their country. It is essential for promoting a feeling of solidarity and national identity (Ekpenyong et al., 2019). The historical development of social studies education highlights its significance as a tool for constructive change, particularly in light of Nigeria's ongoing struggles with a range of societal issues. The curriculum has changed over time from being a colonial instrument to a dynamic discipline that equips students to become engaged citizens who can solve issues facing their country (Edinyang & Unimke, 2014).

Contemporary Societal Challenges in Nigeria

Nigeria, a nation renowned for its wealth of resources, varied culture, and immense potential, nevertheless faces a number of modern societal issues that could seriously affect its stability and progress (Akanle, 2021). In

Nigeria, problems with governance and political instability have persisted. An atmosphere of uncertainty has been brought about by frequent changes in leadership, anomalies in elections, and shortcomings in governance. This volatility has made it more difficult to implement programs effectively and has reduced public confidence in the government (Anazodo et al., 2014). Corruption is a major issue that affects many aspects of society in Nigeria. It exacerbates economic disparity, erodes trust in institutions, and takes funds away from essential public services. The ability of the government to offer citizens' basic services is directly impacted by corruption (Uwak & Udofia, 2016).

Nigeria is home to a wide variety of ethnic and religious groupings, and there have occasionally been conflicts and violent acts as a result of these relationships. These conflicts pose a severe threat to the nation's and society's unity (Reed & Mberu, 2015). Nigeria is a country rich in natural resources, yet it is also very poor and economically unequal. Serious issues include limited economic opportunities, lack of access to necessary services, and income inequality face a large number of citizens (Adeyemi, 2012). Nigeria's healthcare and education systems encounter many obstacles to improving. The repercussions of insufficient infrastructure, money, and access to high-quality services on human growth and well-being are extensive (Fayomi et al., 2018). Nigeria faces several environmental challenges, such as desertification, pollution, and deforestation. As the effects of climate change become more apparent, agriculture and natural resources are negatively impacted (Fasiku, 2021).

One urgent issue that fuels societal discontent and insecurity is youth unemployment. Young people without jobs may express their annoyance and disillusionment through protests, criminal activity, and other types of social unrest (Dum & Nwafor, 2019). The intricacy of Nigeria's societal difficulties is shown by the diverse character of these challenges. A comprehensive strategy is needed to address them, with education being essential (Yusuf, 2022).

Challenges of Implementing Social Studies and Civic Education

Numerous obstacles and difficulties stand in the way of the effective implementation of social studies and civic education in Nigeria. If these challenges are not overcome, they may prevent these academic fields from promoting knowledgeable, involved, and responsible citizens. Lack of funds and resources is a persistent problem that makes social studies and civic education implementation extremely difficult. Budgets for education frequently fall short of what schools require, which leads to obsolete textbooks, insufficient supplies, and restricted access to technology (Levy et al., 2023 & William et al., 2019). Studies have repeatedly demonstrated the detrimental effects of underfunding on educational quality. A research conducted by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) found that there are resource shortages in schools as a result of Nigeria's financial allocation for education being significantly less than the advised international level. The lack of resources makes it difficult to provide modern textbooks, teaching aids, and classroom supplies, which makes it difficult for schools to get the required resources for effective teaching of social studies and civic education (Obiagu, 2019; Igbokwe, 2015).

The quality of teachers the subjects is another crucial factor. Some teachers who teach these subjects are not adequately prepared. There is therefore the need for teachers of social studies and civic education to continue to undergo professional development, according to a research by the National Teachers' Institute in Nigeria. It was discovered that many teachers lacked the pedagogical abilities required to make these subjects interesting to students. Teachers' ability to use new teaching techniques and adjust to changing curriculum needs is limited by

a lack of training and opportunities for capacity building (Agbor & Ashabua, 2019; Obiagu, 2019).

The substance of social studies and civic education in Nigeria has to be revised, according to an examination of the curriculum by academics from prestigious universities. Current societal issues including the effects of social media, digital citizenship, and the role of youth in influencing national development are not sufficiently covered in the curriculum. Because of this mismatch between the curriculum and current challenges, these topics are less successful at educating students for civic engagement (Sele, 2019). The cultural heterogeneity and regional differences in Nigeria provide particular difficulties for the consistent delivery of civics and social studies education. What works and is important in one place might not work in another, thus cultural awareness and regional adaptation are necessary. Sociological research carried out by anthropologists and social scientists has elucidated the various dynamics operating in various parts of Nigeria. The nation's cultural, linguistic, and historical diversity necessitates a strategy that honors regional settings and traditions. If these distinctions are not acknowledged, it may not resonate with communities and students (Idowu et al., 2019; Amali et al., 2013).

The smooth execution of social studies and civic education programmes can be hampered by bureaucratic and administrative issues in the educational system, such as red tape, inefficiencies, and ambiguous policies. Administrative impediments that obstruct the effective delivery of education have been brought to light in reports from educational think tanks and the Nigerian Ministry of Education. Administrative roadblocks can include anything from trouble hiring and assigning teachers to delays in curriculum approval. These problems make it more difficult for educational programs to run smoothly (Okunloye, 2019). It is important to comprehend these obstacles in order to execute civics and social studies instruction efficiently. A comprehensive strategy involving legislators, educators, and communities is needed to address them. The complexity of these problems—ranging from political unrest and corruption to ethnic disputes, economic inequality, and environmental concerns—underlines how urgently they must be resolved in order to maintain the stability and advancement of the country.

Conclusion

The chapter looked at the evolution of social studies in Nigeria, starting from the colonial era. It looked at the importance of civic education and social studies in developing civic consciousness, building national cohesion and patriotism. The chapter further x-rayed the challenges to the effective implementation of social studies and civic education curricula in Nigeria. Some of the challenges identified include poor funding, poor training of teachers, out-dated curriculum contents, bureaucratic intricacies, etc.

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