

SOCIAL STUDIES IMPLEMENTATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of Social Studies implementation in driving National Development Processes (NDP), in the 21st century. NDP encompasses a multifaceted approach, integrating economic growth, social welfare and human capital development to achieve sustainable progress. The paper highlights the significance of Social Studies in fostering informed citizenship, promoting cultural awareness, and developing critical thinking, analytical and problem-solving skills. It discusses the challenges hindering effective Social Studies implementation, including inadequate resources, poor teacher training, and insufficient policy support. Best practices for implementation are also explored, emphasizing innovative approaches, community engagement and stakeholder collaboration. The paper underscores the importance of Social Studies in addressing pressing national concerns, such as sustainable development, global citizenship, and poverty reduction. By cultivating critical thinking, cultural awareness, and civic engagement, Social Studies can empower citizens to contribute to national development. The paper concludes that Social Studies is crucial for achieving national development goals and recommends making it a core subject across all educational levels. Policymakers are urged to enact supportive policies, ensure effective implementation, and monitor progress. By prioritizing Social Studies, Nigeria can equip citizens with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for sustainable national development that is inclusive.

Keywords: National Development processes, social studies implementation, 21st century, Government, Nigeria

Introduction

Relevance of education for socialisation and education in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. In the national policy, education is said to be an instrument for national development. Globally, education is considered as a human right that should be accorded to all. This is the reason why

a lot of international human right bodies consider education as a fundamental human right. Citizens are educated so that they can contribute to the National Development processes, aimed at achieving national goals. National development processes in the 21st century involve a multifaceted approach to achieve economic growth, social welfare, and human capital development. In the context of Nigeria, Challenges to National Development include: Inadequate education, limited access to quality education, resulting in a lack of skilled workers, corruption, widespread corruption hindering economic development and social welfare, Infrastructure Deficits, Inadequate infrastructure, including roads, electricity, and water supply (Asmau, 2023). To address these challenges, certain strategies that target National Development should be implemented. This agrees with the assertion that education is regarded as an instrument for social and economic reconstruction and intricately linked to nation building (Sam, 2010). In like vein, no nation can be imagined without the need for education for laying the foundation of a sustainable development of the nation and to pursue the right course in future (Asmau, 2023). Some of these strategies include; Investing in Education, Increasing funding for education and implementing policies to improve access to quality education, Promoting Good Governance, Strengthening institutions and promoting transparency and accountability, Encouraging Private Sector Participation, Fostering entrepreneurship and encouraging private sector investment in key sectors (Asmau, 2023). However, this paper's discussion lies in leveraging social studies curriculum to foster knowledge acquisition that will help citizens contribute to national development, especially in the 21st century. This agrees with the view of Emiola(2021) that the goal of education in Nigeria is to nurture and produce students who will contribute to their communities and serve society as ethical citizens. In other words, Social studies has been recognised as the medium through which our societal values are being taught to the learners (Emiola, 2021). In a study by Opho and Edinyang (2014), they examined the introduction of Social Studies Education in Nigerian schools with a view to determine its success or failure. The findings of their study revealed that the introduction of Social Studies Education in Nigerian schools is a failure than success which implies that Social Studies as Education had not really achieved its aims and objectives in Nigerian schools. Social Studies in Nigeria educational curriculum is regarded as a subject that is expected to foster knowledge, skills, attitude and actions in the learners. These values are believed to be important factors in human relationship in the society (Asmau, 2023), and are qualities that can motivate citizens to contribute to national development processes. This paper employs a desk review approach to develop the contents. Relevant literature was reviewed under the following sub-headings. Social studies implementation and National Development processes in 21st century. The role of social studies in national development, Challenges in Implementing Social Studies for National Development, Best practices in implementation of social studies for national development, and the potential of social studies to contribute to national development processes in the 21st century.

Social Studies Implementation and National Development Processes in the 21st Century

The 21st century has brought about unprecedented challenges and opportunities for National development. As countries strive to achieve sustainable development goals, reduce poverty, and promote global citizenship, the role of social studies in national development processes has become increasingly important. National development processes in the 21st century involve a multifaceted approach to achieve economic growth, social welfare, and human capital development. It involves; Economic Development, Fostering economic growth through strategic planning, investment in infrastructure, and promoting entrepreneurship, Human Capital Development, Investing in education and healthcare to develop a skilled and healthy workforce, Social Welfare, Implementing policies to reduce poverty, inequality, and social exclusion, Institutional Development, Strengthening institutions, promoting good governance, and ensuring the rule of law. Social studies can play a vital role in addressing these challenges by fostering critical thinking, cultural awareness, and civic engagement.

The Role of Social Studies in National Development

Social studies is an interdisciplinary field that combines the social sciences and humanities to study human behavior, relationships, and institutions. By exploring the complexities of human societies, social studies equips individuals with critical thinking, problem-solving, and civic engagement skills essential for national development. Effective social studies implementation can foster informed citizenship, promote cultural awareness, and develop empathetic and socially responsible individuals. These are further discussed below

i) Fostering informed citizenship

Social Studies implementation plays a crucial role in fostering informed citizenship, which is essential for the functioning of democratic societies (Banks, 2005). Informed citizenship requires individuals to possess a deep understanding of their rights, responsibilities, and the Social economic, and political systems that govern their lives. Ensuring that Informed citizenship contribute to National Development in this 21st century is a national goal that every education stakeholder like Government and schools should be held accountable for. The importance of informed citizenship include,

- a). Promotes Democracy: Citizens have a say in the decision-making process.
- b). Protects Rights: Citizenship provides a framework for protecting individual rights and freedoms.
- c) Fosters Community: Citizenship promotes a sense of community and belonging among citizens.

d) Encourages Participation: being informed encourages citizens to participate in civic and political activities, promoting active engagement and responsibility.

ii). Promoting Cultural Awareness and Understanding

Social studies education can promote cultural awareness and understanding, essential for building inclusive and cohesive societies (Ladson-Billings, 1995). By exploring diverse perspectives and experiences, social studies can help break down stereotypes and promote empathy and tolerance (Gay, 2000). Effective Social studies implementation have been found to address issues of national concern, such as ;

a) Addressing Ethnic and Religious Conflicts

Ajai and Omotesho (2012) in their study highlights the role of social studies in promoting national integration and resolving ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria. Ogunu (2009), argues that social studies education can foster national unity and reduce ethnic and religious tensions in Nigeria. This underscores the national goal of education in Nigeria, which promote achievement of an egalitaegalitarian society, where all citizens could have equal opportunities and be treated fairly.

b) Promoting Civic Engagement and Democracy

Adeyemi and Adekunle (2015) in their study emphasizes the importance of social studies in promoting civic engagement, democracy, and good governance in Nigeria. In like vein, Okeke (2013) argues that social studies education can equip Nigerians with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for active participation in democratic processes.

c) Addressing Socio-Economic Challenges

Akintunde (2017) in a study highlights the potential of social studies to address socio-economic challenges such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment in Nigeria. Adesina (2014) argues that social studies education can provide Nigerians with the critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary to address complex socio-economic challenges.

d) Fostering Sustainable Development

Oyedele (2018) study emphasizes the importance of social studies in promoting sustainable development and environmental education in Nigeria. Adejumo (2016) argues that social studies education can foster sustainable development by promoting environmental awareness, social justice, and human rights in Nigeria.

iii). Developing Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving and Analytical skills

Social studies education can develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, essential for addressing complex national development challenges (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). By

engaging with real-world issues and case studies, social studies can help individuals develop analytical and decision-making skills (Newmann, 1991). These skills are:

a) Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking skills involve the systematic evaluation and analysis of information and ideas to form a judgment or decision. It encompasses; Analyzing information and arguments, Evaluating evidence and sources, Identifying biases and assumptions, developing well-supported conclusions and considering multiple perspectives

b) Problem-Solving Skills

Problem-solving skills involve the ability to identify, analyze, and resolve complex problems in a creative and effective manner. It encompasses: defining and clarifying problems, generating and evaluating potential solutions, selecting and implementing a solution, evaluating and refining the solution, considering multiple perspectives and constraints

c). Analytical Thinking Skills

Analytical thinking skills involve the ability to break down complex information into component parts, evaluate each part, and understand how they relate to each other. It encompasses; identifying patterns and relationships, evaluating data and information, developing and testing hypotheses, drawing conclusions based on evidence, considering multiple perspectives and interpretations

Challenges in implementing social studies for National Development

Despite its importance, social studies implementation faces numerous challenges. These challenges undermine the potential of social studies to contribute to national development processes. Some of the challenges identified by researchers are discussed as follows.

a) Inadequate Curriculum Implementation: One major challenge is the ineffective implementation of the social studies curriculum. This is often due to inadequate teacher training, insufficient resources, and poor policy implementation. The study by Asmau (2023) explores the challenges against the implementation of Junior Secondary School Social Studies curriculum for moral development in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study is a qualitative one that employed a case study research approach. The study revealed that class congestion, inadequate and inappropriate resource materials, wide syllabus and examination pressure were among the factors hindering effective implementation of the curriculum for moral inculcation. Similarly the Findings from a study conducted by Atakpo(2024) revealed that the Basic Education Curriculum in Nigeria already has embedded in it elements of creative and critical thinking and entrepreneurial skills in the content of the curriculum but was faced with challenges of proper implementation. Based on the findings, it was recommended that specialized teachers were required to be able to implement the curriculum. Lack of

governmental support, lack of knowledge and other similar factors have been known to pose a major problem to curriculum development(Nwadiokwu,2018).

b) Lack of Policy Support: Social studies education requires policy support to be effective. However, in Nigeria, there is a lack of clear policy direction and implementation, hindering the potential of social studies to contribute to national development. A study by Omojori and Gbenga-Akanmu (2021) assessed government commitment in fulfilling its obligations in ensuring quality early childhood education (ECE) as outlined in the National Policy on Education; examined the teaching strategies that teachers employed to ensure appropriate teaching and learning process; and assessed the challenges associated to teaching strategies used by teachers. The findings showed that there are not enough ECE professionals, few ECE departments in the universities, poor remuneration of teachers and that teachers employed the use of appropriate teaching strategies and improvised in most cases. They recommended that government should promote and support the training of teachers and implement ECE policy in primary schools.

c) Socio-Economic Challenges: Nigeria faces numerous socio-economic challenges, including poverty, inequality, and ethnic conflicts. These challenges can make it difficult for social studies education to have a meaningful impact on national development. For example, researchers have observed that poor funding is a major problem facing curriculum implementation in Nigerian tertiary institutions (Ogunode, Yiolokun, & Akeredolu, 2019 ; Yemi,Ogunode, Akinbusoye , 2022 and Ogunode, Akin-Ibidiran, & Ibidiran, 2022). They also observe that inadequate funding is one of the major problems facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria

d) Inadequate Emphasis on Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: Social studies education in Nigeria often focuses on rote memorization rather than critical thinking and problem-solving. This can limit the ability of social studies to equip students with the skills they need to contribute to national development. The problem with pedagogy in social studies implementation in Nigeria is the widespread reliance on traditional, teacher-centered methods like rote memorization, neglecting active learning approaches like inquiry-based learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving, which are crucial for effective social studies education, leading to a lack of student engagement and deeper understanding of complex social issues.

e) Limited Access to Quality Education: Basic Education was to be adopted by all countries in a bid to reduce dropout and illiteracy in every society(UNESCO, 1990 , cited in Atakpo 2024) According to Maduekwe, 2015 cited in Atakpo (2024), the Universal Basic Education is free, compulsory and the right of every child, and it is expected that every child acquire appropriate and relevant skills and values to be employable and contribute their quota to national development. Many researchers agree that Nigerians lack access to quality education, which can limit their ability to benefit from social studies education and contribute to national development. Lack of governmental support, lack of knowledge and other similar factors have been known to pose a major problem to curriculum development(Nwadiokwu,2018).

Best Practices in Implementing Social Studies for National Development

Effective social studies implementation requires innovative approaches that address the challenges mentioned above. Project-based learning, service-learning, and technology integration are successful models that promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and civic engagement. For example implementing project based learning in social studies can go a long way in achieving the goals of social studies curriculum for Nigeria.

i) Project-based learning (PBL) is a teaching method that involves students working on real-world projects to learn academic concepts and skills. PBL encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity, which already has been identified as essential in the acquisition of the relevant skills and values necessary for national development processes. Project-based learning is a powerful way to teach social studies, as it encourages critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. By implementing PBL in social studies education, teachers can help students develop a deeper understanding of complex social studies concepts and prepare them for success in an increasingly complex and interconnected world(Wiggins, & McTighe, 2005 ; - Larmer, & Mergendoller, 2010 ; Thomas, 2000).

Enumerated below are some benefits of project based learning in social studies implementation.

Benefits of project based learning (PBL) in Social Studies implementation.

1. Deeper understanding : PBL helps students develop a deeper understanding of social studies concepts and their real-world applications.
2. Improved critical thinking : PBL encourages students to think critically and analytically about complex social studies issues.
3. Enhanced collaboration : PBL promotes collaboration and teamwork among students, essential skills for success in social studies and beyond.
4. Increased engagement : PBL makes learning more engaging and relevant, as students work on projects that interest them.

Examples of project based learning (PBL) in Social Studies implementation

1. Creating a museum exhibit : Students design and create a museum exhibit on a historical topic, such as the Civil Rights Movement.
2. Developing a public service announcement : Students create a public service announcement on a social issue, such as bullying or environmental conservation.
3. Conducting a historical investigation : Students conduct an in-depth investigation of a historical event or issue, such as the American Revolution or the impact of colonialism.

Conclusion

Based on the foreground, Social Studies plays a vital role in national development by fostering informed citizenship, promoting cultural awareness, and developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Effective social studies education is essential for building inclusive and cohesive societies, addressing complex national development challenges, and promoting sustainable development. Furthermore, addressing these challenges and implementing effective strategies, such as ensuring the social studies implementation in our schools, Nigeria can achieve sustainable national educational goals, such as fostering a full and bright economic opportunities for all citizens .

Effective social studies implementation is crucial for national development processes in the 21st century. By addressing challenges and leveraging best practices, social studies can equip individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for informed citizenship and sustainable development. As countries strive to achieve national development goals, the importance of social studies implementation cannot be overstated.

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