
SOCIAL STUDIES AND EMERGING CONCERNS IN GLOBAL AND INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

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Abstract

The global dimension of emerging trends and their manifestations has emerged as a significant worry for individuals, particularly those residing in impoverished and developing nations. The comprehension of events and advancements arising from globalisation and poor governance appears to be ambiguous for a significant number of individuals. As an individual residing within a nation, one who has experienced the effects of unfavourable patterns, it becomes evident that there exists a lack of safeguarding and concern for such individuals. The aforementioned phenomenon has had adverse effects on the well-being of numerous individuals worldwide. The phenomenon under discussion is currently undergoing growth and prevalence, giving the impression that individuals are unable to offer any viable responses or remedies. These themes encompass various dimensions such as climate change, cultural diversity and identity, global governance and international organisations, as well as human rights and social justice. This position paper conducts a thorough examination of existing literature to explore the role of Social Studies Education in fostering global awareness and promoting global citizenship by facilitating a comprehensive understanding of global

issues. The study indicates, among other findings, that Social Studies is a curriculum that addresses the concerns of citizens in a remedial manner. This study proposes that educators at all levels of instruction should intensify their endeavours to promote the content and aims of Social Studies in order to foster peace and enhance global comprehension.

Keywords: Climate change, Cultural diversity, Cultural identity, Human rights, Emerging concerns, Global governance, Social justice

Introduction

Every nation is faced with the imperative to progress comprehensively in all aspects. All nations, regardless of their level of development, aspire to advance scientifically in every possible aspect. Countries want to achieve the pinnacle of development. In the pursuit of attaining such a level of progress, nations encounter several growing challenges. The evolving apprehensions in global and international comprehension mirror the shifting dynamics and complexities in our interdependent world as a result of globalisation and technological progress. These problems are derived from political, socio-economic, and environmental challenges that transcend national boundaries. In light of increasing societal interconnectivity, it is imperative to address these issues in order to foster collaboration, promote global citizenship, and facilitate sustainable development.

Emerging areas of focus in the realm of global and international understanding encompass a diverse range of complex matters that require collective and holistic methodologies. The effective management of climate change, global health concerns, the digital revolution, migration patterns, inequality, cultural diversity, and geopolitical developments necessitates informed decision-making, constructive dialogue, and international collaboration. Through the facilitation of education, societies can foster global consciousness, intercultural understanding, and sustainable development, so fostering

collaboration towards the establishment of a more inclusive, egalitarian, and peaceful global community. It is evident that Ifegbesan (2017) placed significant emphasis on the global recognition of education as a crucial factor in addressing the pressing international and national challenges faced by humanity. Social Studies is a scholarly field that encompasses all aspects of human society, including but not limited to history, geography, economics, politics, and culture. The objective of this educational programme is to equip students with a comprehensive understanding of the world in which they reside, while fostering their ability to engage in critical analysis, make well-informed choices, and cultivate a sense of global responsibility. Consequently, the advancement of a nation in contemporary times is increasingly reliant on both the volume and calibre of education that its citizens acquire. Education serves a dual purpose of imparting historical information to the present generation and equipping them for the exigencies of the present and future. This article addresses several prominent concerns in the realm of global and international studies, namely examining climate change, cultural diversity and identity, global governance, and international organisations. Through the consideration and resolution of these aforementioned challenges, civilizations have the potential to cultivate a global community that is characterised by inclusivity, sustainability, and harmony.

Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

The term “climate change” denotes the modification of the Earth’s climate as a result of human actions, such as the combustion of fossil fuels, deforestation, and other practises that contribute to the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The provided statement aligns with the definition of climate change as outlined by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2007 as cited in Baker & Kankam, 2016). According to this official definition, climate change refers to any alteration that can be attributed to human activities, directly or indirectly, which modify the chemical composition of the Earth’s

atmosphere. This alteration is distinct from the natural variability observed in climate patterns over similar time spans.

Over the past five decades, there has been an increase in the frequency of weather and climate-related disasters, as evidenced by the heightened aridity observed in the Sahel and Southern regions of Africa. Climate changes have had a profound impact on the availability of water resources and agricultural productivity. The impact of climate change is particularly significant for individuals and communities who rely on sectors that are highly susceptible to climate variations. Moreover, these individuals often possess limited resources and adaptive capacities to effectively manage the challenges posed by climate change (Baker & Kankam, 2016). One potential solution to this predicament involves the dissemination of knowledge among the general population, who play a role, to varying degrees, in addressing the issue of climate change. The instruction of pupils on the causes, impacts, and methods of addressing climate challenges is of utmost importance. The utilisation of environmentally focused Social Studies plays a vital role in equipping individuals with the necessary tools to address the environmental issues stemming from climate change.

According to Kwenin (2021), an effective approach to addressing climate change issues involves integrating climate change within the school curriculum, particularly within the domain of Social Studies. The reason for this is that the Social Studies curriculum significantly contributes to the comprehensive development of students by fostering their environmental consciousness and enabling them to recognise the impact of their actions on the environment. According to Kwenin (2021), the provision of education to individuals regarding environmental awareness and engagement in environmental initiatives enables them to effectively tackle the environmental issues that our society is currently facing.

Social Studies serves as a valuable instrument that can be employed to address environmental concerns. According to Essien et al. (2019), Social Studies encompasses a comprehensive and

organised examination that draws upon various academic disciplines, including anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, and sociology. This implies that Nigeria, as a nation, necessitates individuals who possess the ability to engage in critical and constructive thinking, alongside individuals who possess robust political, social, and environmental inclinations, in order to effectively contribute to the resolution of environmental issues, such as climate change. Consequently, the integration of Social Studies as an academic field within the education of climate change and sustainability becomes imperative.

Cultural Diversity and Identity

In our contemporary globalised world, societies are experiencing a growing level of interconnectivity, resulting in a greater diversity of cultures and an increased frequency of interpersonal encounters between persons of different cultural backgrounds. The topic of cultural variety has sparked much discourse on a worldwide scale, mostly due to the complexities and difficulties associated with cultural diversity resulting from the processes of globalisation and migration. The prominence and challenges associated with cultural diversity and identity are increasingly recognised in contemporary communities. The ideas of cultural variety and identity are intricately connected and have significant implications for the formation of societies and individual experiences.

The concept of cultural diversity encompasses the subjective perceptions of individuals and the objective existence of a wide range of diverse elements, including knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, languages, abilities and disabilities, genders, ethnicities, races, nationalities, sexual orientations, socio-economic status, age, religious beliefs, political beliefs, and other ideologies, among human beings (Attama, 2022). Cultural sensitivity pertains to the recognition and appreciation of diverse cultural perspectives and practises. Attama (2022) conducted a

study which found that cultural variety has a positive impact on fostering acceptance and respect.

Globalisation, as a phenomenon, gives rise to three interconnected complexities: firstly, it has heightened the tensions between migration and citizenship; secondly, it has stimulated the emergence of a national politics centred around identity; and thirdly, it has exacerbated the phenomenon of nationalistic xenophobia, as exemplified by the case of South Africa. Currently, there has been a significant shift in the ethnic composition of inhabitants across several global regions (Alhendi, József, Péter, & Péter, 2021). These occurrences have heightened the discourse surrounding the potential beneficial or negative consequences of migration and cultural diversity on nations and the welfare of indigenous populations. The media discourse commonly portrays cultural diversity in a favourable light, yet, there exists a perspective that suggests an extensive influx of migrants may have detrimental effects on the welfare of native populations (Alhendi et al., 2021).

Conradie (2019) discusses two significant issues related to cultural diversity and identity: cultural appropriation and digital identity creation. These concerns are addressed in order to gain a better understanding of the changing dynamics of cultural diversity and identity in our present-day society. Cultural appropriation refers to the utilisation of elements derived from a specific culture by individuals belonging to a different cultural group, in manners that are considered unsuitable or disrespectful. Cultural appropriation pertains to the assimilation, appropriation, or emulation of cultural features by a dominant culture from another culture. Cultural appropriation refers to the inadvertent assimilation of cultural components originating from a disadvantaged culture into the practises and norms of a dominant culture (Conradie, 2019).

The formation of digital identity is an emerging topic that is closely linked to cultural diversity and identity, with social media playing a significant role in this phenomenon. The advent and widespread adoption of digital technologies have significantly

altered the manner in which individuals shape and showcase their identities within virtual environments (Boyd, 2014). Digital platforms provide individuals with many chances for self-expression, fostering connections, and facilitating the exploration of varied identities. The formation of digital identity gives rise to concerns regarding authenticity, privacy, and the influence of online interactions on individuals' self-perception (Boyd, 2014).

By engaging in online activism, employing storytelling techniques, and fostering community connections, individuals have the capacity to contest prevailing narratives and foster the development of shared identities. The many platforms of social media exert a significant influence on the formation of cultural views and identities through the amplification of specific narratives and the marginalisation of others (Hunt, Marx, & Lipson, 2018). Various social media platforms can serve as fertile grounds for the proliferation of cyberbullying, hate speech, and the dissemination of detrimental stereotypes. The capacity to disseminate and access information on a worldwide level can be correlated with both advantageous and detrimental effects on cultural variety and identity. The adverse online encounters have the potential to significantly impact individuals' cultural identities and overall welfare in a damaging manner (Hunt et al., 2018). The ongoing evolution of cultural diversity necessitates the consideration of growing issues pertaining to cultural appropriation and the formation of digital identities. Cultural variety may give rise to many difficulties, such as instances of cultural misinterpretations, discriminatory practises, and disparities in social conditions (European Commission, 2019).

In his work, Green (2021) argues that cultural variety is closely associated with the nation's social, economic, and political challenges, emphasising its negative consequences. The act of cultural appropriation has the potential to eliminate marginalised cultures and sustain stereotypes (Nittle, 2021). Hence, it is imperative to foster consciousness and provide instruction to individuals regarding the advantages of honouring the cultural origins and meaning of practises and symbols. By including Social

Studies into the curriculum, educators have the opportunity to instill in pupils an appreciation for and acceptance of all cultures and identities. This pedagogical approach has the potential to cultivate social unity, enhance comprehension, and establish a balanced and integrated global community. Through the examination of diverse cultural contexts and their respective impacts on human civilization, students cultivate qualities such as empathy, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to effectively negotiate intercultural engagements (Karataş, Eckstein, Noack, Rubini, & Crocetti, 2023).

Global Governance and International Organizations

In the contemporary era of heightened interconnectivity, the significance of global governance and international organisations has become paramount in effectively tackling intricate global issues. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine, as well as the subsequent international reaction, serves as a notable example. Global governance refers to the collaborative endeavours and methods employed by governments, international organisations, and other stakeholders to effectively address and manage global challenges. International organisations have a pivotal role in facilitating debate, fostering cooperation, and formulating policies aimed at addressing global challenges (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 2019).

The phenomenon of globalisation has played a pivotal role in fostering heightened levels of interconnectedness and interdependence across nations, economies, and cultures (Held et al., 2019). Challenges like as climate change, economic interdependence, and transnational dangers necessitate cooperative endeavours that extend beyond the confines of individual nations. The aforementioned circumstances have given rise to a range of intricate global issues, such as poverty, inequality, armed conflicts, pandemics, and environmental degradation (Biermann, Pattberg, Van Asselt, & Zelli, 2009). These difficulties transcend national boundaries and require collaborative efforts and cooperation.

The phenomenon of globalisation has engendered a growing impetus for the establishment of efficient mechanisms of global governance, aimed at facilitating coordination and collaboration among nations. This pursuit of effective global governance is driven by the objectives of fostering peace and security, as well as resolving issues pertaining to global justice. Global governance serves as a structural mechanism for the harmonisation and collaboration between governments, international organisations, and various other entities involved in global affairs (Abbott, Genschel, Snidal, & Zangl, 2015). The aforementioned process enables the exchange of ideas, the establishment of agreements, and the formulation of shared approaches to tackle worldwide issues. Collaborative endeavours in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and disarmament play a pivotal role in fostering stability and mitigating the occurrence of conflicts.

As the evaluation of global difficulties becomes more reliant on global governance and international organisations, these entities encounter notable obstacles including issues of legitimacy and accountability, coordination and fragmentation, as well as power imbalances and inequalities within the realm of global governance. The aforementioned difficulties present significant barriers to the efficacy and credibility of global governance processes and international organisations. The presence of power disparities within nations and the consolidation of power in a limited number of significant states can impede the decision-making dynamics in the realm of global governance (Guzzini, 2013).

The issue of global governance legitimacy is a significant concern due to potential perceptions of inadequate democratic participation and transparency in decision-making processes (Stone, 2013). The potential restriction of civil society and marginalised people's involvement in global governance systems raises concerns over their legitimacy. The challenge lies in guaranteeing the level of accountability of international organisations towards member states and people that are impacted (Levy & Newell, 2005). Given the aforementioned

issues, it is imperative to consider the measures that may be implemented to guarantee the efficacy and credibility of global governance. A crucial remedy entails the implementation of Social Studies instruction within our educational institutions.

Social Studies Education plays a crucial role in the development of well-informed and actively involved global citizens who possess a comprehensive understanding of global government and international organisations. In light of the growing interconnectedness of the world, the significance of global governance and international organisations has become increasingly apparent as essential tools for effectively tackling global concerns. The field of Social Studies Education holds significant value in fostering the development of global citizenship through its emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge pertaining to other cultures, societies, and global interconnections (Banks, 2018). According to Banks (2018), students will acquire a comprehensive understanding of the interrelated nature of global challenges and the imperative for cooperative approaches through global governance. This educational approach aims to equip students with the capacity to actively participate as informed, discerning, and involved global citizens. The subject matter significantly contributes to the cultivation of knowledgeable and involved global citizens who possess a comprehensive understanding of and actively engage in global governance and international organisations.

Human Rights and Social Justice

The aforementioned concepts serve as foundational tenets that bolster the endeavour for a fair and impartial global society. The global significance of human rights promotion and protection, together with the pursuit of social justice, has increased in prominence. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, serves as a fundamental and pivotal document in the field of human rights. The document presents a comprehensive structure for safeguarding civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. The concept of human rights

acknowledges the inherent dignity and value of every individual. According to Song (2015),

The importance of human rights and social justice cannot be overstated when it comes to tackling pressing global issues such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, armed conflicts, and environmental degradation. The framework offered facilitates the addressing of the fundamental factors contributing to these challenges and the promotion of sustained development. The upholding of human rights and the promotion of social equity are vital for the establishment of harmonious and secure societies. Societies that prioritise inclusivity, socioeconomic equity, and the protection of human rights are more inclined to foster enduring peace and mitigate the occurrence of violence. Despite the advancements made, the persistence of human rights breaches on a global scale necessitates ongoing endeavours to effectively confront and mitigate these transgressions (Amnesty International, 2021).

The field of Social Studies promotes the critical analysis of various viewpoints and the exploration of the lived experiences of persons and communities impacted by infringements against human rights and instances of social injustice (Hicks, 2014). This fosters the development of empathy and facilitates a more profound comprehension of the intricacies associated with these global issues. Social studies classrooms offer students the opportunity to participate in discourse, civil deliberation, and analytical contemplation over matters pertaining to human rights and social justice (Kahne & Westheimer, 2013).

The discipline of Social Studies provides students with the necessary skills to engage in a critical analysis of media portrayals, enabling them to question and oppose the preconceptions and biases that are often perpetuated by the media (Hanson, 2012). Media literacy empowers students to actively participate in responsible consumption and creation of information, thereby contributing to the development of a more inclusive and equitable society. The process of educating kids may encounter opposition from many stakeholders as a result of its delicate nature. Educators

have the capacity to assist students in navigating these matters by establishing an environment that fosters open discourse, demonstrating tolerance for many perspectives, and promoting a mindset characterised by receptiveness to new ideas.

Conclusion

The prioritisation of climate change and environmental sustainability is imperative for individuals, schools, organisations, and governments due to the significant threats they pose to human existence. Consequently, Social Studies can serve as a catalyst for generating awareness and providing education to students and the general public regarding the essentiality of climate and environmental protection. An further rising issue of significance pertains to cultural diversity. Consequently, it is imperative to integrate cultural variety and foster a robust sense of identity within the realm of Social Studies. The acquisition of education plays a pivotal role in equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in an increasingly diverse and globalised society. The incorporation of diverse perspectives in Social Studies Education can be achieved by promoting cultural competence and empowering students to develop their identities. This can be accomplished by cultivating understanding, empathy, and a commitment to social justice. The significance of global governance and international organisations has grown in prominence since they play a crucial role in tackling global concerns and promoting collaboration among nations. In order to tackle these difficulties, it is imperative to prioritise initiatives aimed at improving inclusion, bolstering coordination, fostering transparency and accountability, and conducting periodic evaluations of mandates. The notions of human rights and social justice are closely interconnected, as they both aim to achieve parity, impartiality, and respect for the inherent worth of every person. By adopting an intersectional and inclusive perspective, societies can collaborate in order to dismantle barriers, question power dynamics, and promote revolutionary change.

Suggestions

Based on the topics discussed in this study, it has been proposed that integrating environmental sustainability into the curriculum across all levels of education would be beneficial. Additionally, it has been suggested that the Social Studies curriculum should encompass cultural diversity in order to foster a robust sense of cultural identity among students. Ultimately, there was a recommendation to extend the implementation of the course beyond the primary and junior secondary school levels.

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