

**TRENDING EVENTS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES  
CONTEMPORARY FOCUS: WHICH WAY FORWARD?**

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**Abstract**

*In this study, prominent topics that should be given more attention in Social Studies curricula at Nigerian universities and colleges of education were attempted to be identified. The field of Social Studies has to be expanded for both domestic and foreign audiences. In order to provide society with the pragmatic education it needs, Social Studies aims, materials, pedagogies, and ideologies required to be updated, developed, and refined over time. Instilling concepts for achieving coordinated social life, entrepreneurship education, and preparing graduates to overcome poverty and contribute to national development would be the main goals of modern Social Studies instruction. The following are some emerging concerns that call for a modern Social Studies focus: the resurgence of coups throughout Africa, as well as issues with national security, banditry, insurrection, and poverty. Other issues include the growing number of children in Nigeria, the continent's poverty rate, and the use of inefficient*

*pedagogies. Through research, excellent lecturer professional development, vigorous teaching of emerging concerns, and instructional design that fosters creativity, the breadth of Social Studies can be expanded. Projections of entrepreneurial education, financing, recurrent curriculum revisions, and the use of Social Studies laboratories are also necessary. The following limitations were noted: inadequate training speakers, restricted periodic revision, and limited finance. The gadgets have no firm hold, and corruption diminishes the educational value of Social Studies curriculum. Additionally, publishers must place a strong emphasis on current topics and expand the audience for Social Studies beyond the confines of the traditional classroom. The suggestions that followed were made: the ongoing addition of current national and international concerns to the Social Studies curriculum. Among other things, lecturers should be creative in their approach and prioritise entrepreneurial education to make Social Studies objectives applicable and realistic.*

**Keywords:** Trending events, Social Studies, Contemporary focus.

## **Introduction**

The field of Social Studies is expanding throughout national and international societies. This is due to the fact that the international education content of Social Studies is essential for peace education, global awareness, cross-cultural learning opportunities, moral behaviour updates for students, exposure to further social skill acquisition for entrepreneurial experience, and instillation of social relations skills for long-term political stability. For these reasons, Ikwumelu (2009) concurred that a new Social Studies viewpoint should emphasise global consciousness. Mezieobi (2004) confirmed earlier findings by pointing out that any Social Studies instruction lacking in modern information, learning opportunities, and the ability to reposition students to tackle modern issues is worthless. In order to make the learning relevant today, Social Studies should be appropriately focused on current national and international

events. This is especially true at the tertiary level in Nigeria and other parts of the world. For this reason, Social Studies education shouldn't be centred around a particular location.

Mezieobi, Onyeanus, and Ugwuanyi (2020) argued that being globally aware does not mean completely giving up on learning in the local or national context; rather, they argued for a combination of national and worldwide educational experiences. The goal is to develop well-rounded, high-quality Social Studies professionals who can improve and elevate countries as well as global societies by arming them with a variety of skills, values, and knowledge to contribute to the growth of national and worldwide society. In order to elucidate the subject matter of this discussion, the following will be looked at: Which topics are popular right now for Social Studies? How might the scope of Social Studies education be expanded to include teaching about current events?

### **Conceptual Issues**

Mezieobi (2016) described Social Studies as “value laden and value saturated,” implying that the primary goal of Social Studies is the projection of value education or the inculcation of cultural ideas or new learning experiences that would raise the standard of living in society. Akpochafo (2014) thought of Social Studies as environmental focused, teaching values, skills, and knowledge to improve quality of lives. Additionally, according to Uyamasi and Okobia (2014), Social Studies imparts social skills that help students become self-sufficient, entrepreneurial, and civically competent. Trending events are crucial for Social Studies teaching and learning because of its many functions, particularly in higher education.

Social Studies can be defined as social living education, which aims to provide students with up-to-date, pertinent knowledge to help them compete both domestically and globally. The newest and most well-liked events in the fields of politics, society, economy, and technology, both domestically and globally, are known as trending events. In addition, there are events taking place that educate students about contemporary global issues that transcend national borders, such as epidemics, wars, scientific and technological

advances, economic concerns, democratic revolutions, security education, national and international security, and international education. Given the modern emphasis on Social Studies, curricula should be dynamic, reflective of current events, and never stagnant. “(Social Studies) curriculum should be flexible to accumulate evolving new knowledge and (entrepreneurial) skills which learners will acquire to be functional in a changing society,” proposed Cornelius-Ukpebi and Obara (2009). Thus, the current emphasis of Social Studies instruction in Nigerian tertiary institutions should be on societally relevant education in terms of content, learning experiences, objectives, methodologies, evaluation, and overall curriculum implementation.

### **What are the Trending Issues for Social Studies Contemporary Focus?**

The following is a brief examination of trending concerns for the emphasis of the Contemporary Social Studies curriculum:

Resurgent coups on the African continent: The resurgence of coups throughout Africa is in opposition to good administration, nation-building, modernization, and the benefits of stable, guaranteed democracy. “Political elites, (who) ... seek to rule must learn to consolidate the country’s democracy in order to avert reversion to the eras of coups,” Brako (2021) remarked in response to this oddity. African leaders ought to prioritise social justice, reject corruption and ethnocentrism, uphold individuals’ fundamental rights, be insensitive to the needs of the public, and combat the alarmingly high rate of poverty. Social Studies have a role to play in promoting intellectual understanding, ensuring long-term peace, and promoting ethical public governance in Africa and around the world. Disputes should be resolved quickly since they undermine the economic stability, viability, and unity of developing countries. This is to guarantee that leaders exercising democratic power do so in a sane manner. Furthermore, folks must be reoriented to prioritise national interest over sectionalism in activities.

Threat to global economy and peace, as well as national insecurity: Nigeria is currently experiencing a widespread and

worrisome level of insecurity (Nwaubani, Nwaubani, Okechukwu & Bassey, 2021). The international world order, world peace, and developing countries' economies are all at risk due to insecurity. The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine is one example. These topics ought to be taught as contemporary strategic topics in Social Studies classes. This method helps students grow intellectually, creatively, and sensitively to global events and concerns that have a negative impact on humanity.

**Insurgency and banditry:** Although criminal forces' plot to topple Nigeria's government was thwarted, there was a significant cost in terms of lives lost, displaced people, economic dissatisfaction, and governance. The stability of the country is being threatened by the festering banditry operations in northwest Nigeria. Adebayo and Adeduntan (2021) raised alarm and pointed out that Nigeria's increasing rate of insecurity foreshadows danger for the country's overall political stability and economic strength. Factors that contribute to conflict, as well as techniques for managing and resolving it, should be highlighted in Social Studies instruction.

**Rising degree of poverty** Youth unemployment and poverty are at all-time highs. More Nigerians are now living in poverty as a result of the removal of oil subsidies and the inflation rate. Research in Social Studies and meaningful governance should focus on reducing and improving poverty. Ben (2015) stated, "Nigerians want a leader with visions to solve unemployment problems, provide electric power, the catalyst of development, and control poverty to the barest minimum" for this reason.

**Out of school children:** According to UNESCO (2022) there are 20 million out-of-school children in Nigeria. This is our environmental challenge and a significant social issue in Social Studies. Young people who lack the necessary skills to support themselves will grow up to be armed robbers, kidnappers, bandits, terrorists, rebels, and so forth.

**Pedagogies applied ineffectively:** To meet the given goals and objectives, Social Studies instruction can be delivered in a variety of creative ways. Mezieobi (2014) proposed a number of innovative and appropriate teaching strategies, including computer-assisted

instruction, the futures wheel, team cooperative teaching, programmed instruction, flexible scheduling, the inquiry method, and the demonstration method. However, Mezieobi, Onyeanusí, and Ugwuanyi (2020) questioned the efficacy and efficiency of teachers in implementing these strategies in teaching Social Studies. The deficiencies that have been found necessitate the reempowerment of Social Studies instructors with the necessary knowledge, abilities, and capacity to employ cutting-edge Social Studies techniques that will enhance students' creativity, critical thinking, and process management during instruction. Rather than assigning or endorsing any particular teaching methodology, Akpochafo (2014) recommended a blend of approaches and the skillful implementation of each method's advantages by outstanding educators. The utilisation of cutting-edge instructional pedagogies by Social Studies instructors should play a major role in teacher preparation, service delivery, and professional development, with opportunities for workshops, conferences, and seminars. This will help to foster knowledge acquisition and learning.

Climate change: The world's weather patterns have changed in terms of intensity. Drastic rainfall, droughts, low agricultural yields, bushfires, suffocation of animal breeding and raising, including death by flooding, and drying up of rivers and water bodies are some of its manifestations. Because of the negative effects on the global ecosystem, increasing economic survival is required. Global attention is drawn to climate change because of its emergency contributions that combine physical and mental control. The goal of Social Studies education is to provide students the ability to think critically, appreciate the importance of reasoning, and recognise and solve societal issues (Mezieobi, 2006). It should be mentioned that, according to Meieobi, Mezieobi, Nzokurum & Sampson (2014), "climate change is a contemporary area of study that requires functional implementation of the Social Studies curriculum in Nigerian universities in order to be relevant to national quest for maintaining, preserving and managing the environment or sustainable social living."

In reaction to climate change, Social Studies curricula should

be adjusted to emphasise problem-solving and research. Security education: According to Nwaubani *et al.* (2021), the most effective way to combat the insecurity monster in Nigeria today is to provide targeted, well-articulated security education at all educational levels by all levels of government, particularly in the Social Studies curriculum. Social Studies curricula at all educational levels should include content on security education that includes up-to-date knowledge, data publications, and hands-on learning opportunities. This is because it can effectively raise students' awareness of the importance of peaceful social interactions and how diverse ethnic groups can work together to rebuild Nigeria's unity and purpose.

Unrelated factors: Youth restlessness, students' assessments of the teaching-learning process, skill development, human rights education, prevention of political violence, the effects of migration on national development, creative social living, and role modelling are just a few of the social issues that require more attention in Social Studies.

### **How to Improve the Scope of Social Studies?**

The scope of Social Studies can be expanded in light of the ongoing concerns that are occurring in Nigerian politics and around the world by:

**Researches:** Current studies and publications continue to be a reliable way to broaden the field of Social Studies. While Uwazie (2008:3) stated that research is "the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems," Anyanwu (2000) saw research as opening up new paths of inquiry in the hunt for social problem solutions. Social Studies gain legitimacy from significant research. Mezieobi and Irikang (2013) verified that, in addition to being heavily utilised for research in developed countries, information and communication technology (ICT) is still not well-established in Nigeria's educational system. By extension, Social Studies research is included in this.

High-quality professional development: According to Imogie (2010), Akpochafo (2014), and Mezieobi (2016), Social Studies instructors and lecturers would benefit from qualitative ongoing

development, which would enhance the subject matter of Social Studies education. Good instructors should be able to use cutting edge technology to teach Social Studies and conduct research projects both within and outside of the classroom. They should also publish well-researched textbooks, journals, and effective teaching materials.

**Teaching emerging issues:** Present and future national and international issues should be the main emphasis of Social Studies education. Making education practical and pertinent to society needs is what this approach entails. To be relevant in today's global world, any valuable Social Studies education must provide for new learning opportunities and the development of innovative skills (Mezieobi, Onyeausi, & Ugwuanyi, 2020). This is to make sure that Social Studies are relevant and competent to delve into the problems and demands of the modern world. Thus, Social Studies are implicitly intended to address current and upcoming educational situations.

**Organising instruction to foster students' creativity:** Problem-solving requires creative thinking, which instructors can support by planning lesson plans that encourage learning. According to Eze (2019), instructors who use instructional packages to involve students in a creative learning process are the ones that effectively teach Social Studies. It is inferred that Social Studies instructors with a focus on quality planning arrange their lessons to foster student participation, creativity, and teamwork. Transfer of learning also facilitates the identification, investigation, and resolution of social issues. The impact Social Studies have on society, the country, and the world is what determines its value.

**Education for entrepreneurship:** Social Studies curricula should go further in the area of entrepreneurial education. According to Onyeausi (2015):78, this is "... to equip the youth with the skills and knowledge to create wealth." The growth of the entrepreneurial class is valued by society in order to diversify the economy. Social Studies would become more marketable, appealing, and representative of the demands of the populace if it produced graduates with autonomous abilities for creative existence and



survival. It would also serve as a means of preparing people to boost the economy through their clever ideas and innovative thinking. For this reason, Nnazor (2005) emphasised that entrepreneurship education equips students with the knowledge and abilities to structure business ideas.

In Social Studies research, aggressive government backing will expand the field's boundaries in terms of research, content creation, materials acquisition and use, teacher training through conferences, workshops and seminars, historical site visits, resource person utilisation, and other areas. Akpochafo (2014) expresses disapproval towards the government's inactive support of education in Nigeria, given the sector's acknowledged significance for both national growth and economic transformation.

Periodic curriculum modification, renewal, and changes are necessary to keep the Social Studies curriculum current, enhanced, and expanded. Mezieobi (2012) expressed alarm about the fact that the National Universities Social Studies norm has not been reviewed in twenty-nine years, up until this year. This was a severe delay in the process of improving the curriculum.

**Social Studies laboratories:** As these facilities are established in Nigerian higher education institutions, students will be exposed to artefacts, traditional cultural heritage, cultural education, and an awareness of various cultural practises.

### **Conclusion**

This admirable goal is centred on contemporary education, providing Social Studies teachers and lecturers with cutting-edge pedagogies and updating the content of Social Studies curricula to reflect shifting global challenges. In order to fit in and live in a country with diminishing chances and resources, the learners are expected to possess entrepreneurial education and hands-on learning experiences.

### **Suggestions**

The issues discussed in the discourse served as the basis for the following recommendations: various Social Studies organisations

in Nigeria should push for the inclusion of Social Studies at the school certificate level in WAEC and NECO examinations, as this will promote the integrity, recognition, and relevance of Social Studies; teachers and lecturers should be resourceful in reflecting pertinent societal issues that will help learners to survive; and the Frontiers of Social Studies should be continuously expanded by incorporating contemporary issues across nations and the international societies.

Social Studies will become a practical educational tool for socioeconomic transformation if it emphasises and instills entrepreneurial education. To this end, Social Studies should receive adequate funding to support the purchase of technology tools that will help with research and instruction in the subject. In order to prepare functioning professionals in Social Studies, teacher training institutions (universities and colleges of education) in Nigeria should expand and assess the contents of innovative pedagogies.

In order to solve social problems, lecturers must plan their Social Studies lessons to offer a variety of learning opportunities and to foster experiences in rational thinking for information search and decision making. In order to spark their interest and encourage their contributions to knowledge, students need, at the very least, be properly involved and engaged in the teaching-learning process.

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