

**ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES FACING
SOCIAL STUDIES TEXTBOOKS IN THE
'NEW WORLD'**

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Abstract

Social Studies is a dynamic curriculum that is society - oriented and culture - bound. The learning contents of Social Studies not only consist of facts, concepts and generalizations on desirable universal, contextual, personal, inter-group and societal issues and events, but also extend to the acquisition of skills, values and knowledge. These are often encoded in textbooks. Studies show that teachers and learners greatly rely on the use of textbook and improvements in technology and its adaptation have made digital textbooks (e-textbooks) a preference among younger learners often regarded as Gen Z and Gen Alpha. The study adopted both content analysis and review of extant literature to examine textbooks as educational resource, preference and attitude of learners and teachers to their use, challenges facing printed and digital textbooks and prospects of textbook as an educational resource in Social Studies education. The author concludes that paper-printed and the digital/e-textbooks are inevitable, complementary and not competitive. It is therefore suggested among other things that teachers and scholars should be continually enlightened on how to effectively use textbooks as educational resource; and teachers educational programmes,

workshops, trainings and seminars should be regularly organized to enhance capacity development and familiarity with the use of technology as a viable instructional material, to promote critical thinking and active reading skills among learners.

Keywords: *Textbooks, E-books, Tablet, Social Studies, Curriculum.*

Introduction

The phrase ‘new world’ implies the existence of two different worlds; one that is ‘old’ and the other that is ‘new’. Old according to Collins (2004) refers to something that has existed for a long time and new as something that has only recently been discovered or noticed. In this context, the new world is characterized by fast-paced monumental changes in social structures and forms, new ways of doing things and nascent culture. Learning to adapt to new situations is one of the primary goals of Social Studies education, along with helping students to develop the knowledge, skills, and values and attitudes necessary for their own survival and the flourishing of society as a whole, as well as facilitating their socialisation into the norms of responsible citizenship (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council - NERDC, 2013; Jekayinfa, 2019).

Social Studies is thus seen as a society-focused, culture-bound, and dynamic curriculum that many nations have accepted into their educational system as a vital and basic subject to support individual and national growth. To prepare students for a life of significance, responsibility, and engagement in the world, Social Studies aims at imparting knowledge of “global context” (Ogundare, 2010). Since the curriculum must be responsive to the needs and challenges of the community, its contents and specific objectives change throughout time. In Nigeria, Social Studies was formerly a standalone subject and is now a component of the National Values for Basic Education Curriculum. The facts, concepts, values, skills and other learning objectives of the curriculum are often transmitted through the use of textbooks and

workbooks among other educational resources. Collins (2004) states that students use textbooks because they provide reliable sources of knowledge about the subject being studied. The primary goal of this teaching tool is to share what has been learned with students in the process of creating a curriculum for them. According to studies conducted by Schug, Western, and Enochs (1997), teachers of social studies put premium on delivering lessons that are heavily rooted in textbooks. Knight (2015) claims that students used to rely on both their teachers (who had the authority to choose the course of study) and the textbooks they used to get their knowledge.

On the other hand, as a consequence of improvements in technology, there are now digital or electronic textbooks, braille, audio books, and a range of other educational resources that have been adopted and adapted to teaching and learning. These pose a severe challenge for the conventional technique of learning and teaching, which is the usage of paper textbooks. Therefore, the goal of this research is to look at how the rise of online and digital educational resources is affecting the education of students taking Social Studies courses in Nigeria. It will also look at the future of paper textbooks, specifically how they will be used in the classroom and how students will learn better in the field of Social Studies. This is important due of the ever-evolving nature of the curriculum in today's society, which is distinguished by fast developments in technological innovation and substantial social transformations. The goal of this study is to delve into the role, relevance, and potentials of textbooks as a kind of pedagogical content in relation to Nigeria's implementation of Social Studies curriculum. This is in the light of the dynamics of a rapidly changing world, the preference and attitude of learners and teachers to the use of the various genres of textbooks in teaching Social Studies. Therefore, this paper adopts content analysis and descriptive methodologies in interrogating Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria, textbooks as educational resource, preference and attitude of learners and teachers to the use of the various genres of textbook in Social Studies; the prospects of textbook as an educational resource and the way forward to

address the challenges facing Social Studies textbooks in the new world.

Social Studies Curriculum in Nigeria

The curriculum of Social Studies is wide and broad in scope because it deals with all aspects of man's reality and it integrates all other school subjects to study the relationship between man and his entire environment (Falade, 2008). To be effective, a country's Social Studies curriculum must reflect the nation's overall beliefs, developmental phases, and policy objectives. American students are held to a high standard of "civic competency," which comprises the "knowledge, intellectual processes, and democratic attitudes" that are essential for full and active participation in American democracy. Education in Social Studies in the United States of America according to the National Council of Social Studies - NCSS (1994) is primarily focused on developing this kind of civic literacy. Moreover, it is to aid young people in making informed and deliberate decisions for the greater good of society as citizens of a democratic society that respects and celebrates cultural variety and that operates in a globally interdependent environment (NCSS, 1992 & 1994). This is why lessons from kindergarten through high school have been categorized into 10 overarching topics. One way of categorizing data on the global human experience may be seen in these categories. The topics include culture, time, continuity, and change; people, places, and environments; personal growth and identification; individuals, groups, and institutions; systems of governance; the means of production, distribution, and consumption; the intersections of science, technology, and society; international connections; and civic principles and practices.

Social Studies programme in Nigeria, as articulated by the country's educational philosophy includes the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society, the training of the mind in the understanding of the world

around and the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (FRN, 2013).

Therefore, Jekayinfa (2019) notes that in Nigeria, the national objectives of Social Studies includes encouraging the development of good citizenship, the upliftment of moral standards and character, and fostering a greater sense of community and empathy throughout the Nigerian population. Other objectives are to provide assistance in resolving key issues pertaining to national unity and economic progress, as well as promoting global awareness and training individuals to be tolerant of people of other ethnic backgrounds. Specifically, students in Nigeria through exposure to Social Studies instruction at the Basic level are expected to develop the skills and ability essential for adaptation to a changing environment and develop ethics of good citizenship and the willingness to contribute to the development of the society, and acquire the right type of values and attitudes (NERDC, 2013).

The teaching and learning of Social Studies topics are arranged spirally and implemented at the Primary levels 1-3, 4-6, and 7-9(Junior Secondary School 1-3) as a theme of the National Values Curriculum. Lessons at the Basic Education are categorized into four subthemes of Social Studies principles, the family as a fundamental unit of society, culture and social values, and social and health concerns. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and the National Universities Commission (NUC) are in charge of deciding what topics will be included in higher education degree programmes at Colleges of Education and Universities respectively.

Textbook as an Educational Resource

To a greater extent than only the acquisition of facts, ideas, and generalisations about desired global, contextual, personal, inter-group, and societal concerns and occurrences, the learning materials of Social Studies also extend to the development of

skills, values, and knowledge. This is because the study of universal, contextual, personal, and inter-group values is central to the subject of Social Studies, yet these values are frequently buried in a variety of textbooks. A textbook is, without a doubt, an invaluable educational resource that aids in both the teaching and learning of a certain subject. Educators may more easily impart knowledge, skills, and ethics to their students if the textbooks are well-organized and presented in themes. Textbooks may be written by one author or a group of authors, and publishing houses are responsible for getting them into students' hands. Authors expand contents on curriculum and translate them into learning opportunities and classroom exercises (Valverde, Bianchi, Wolfe, & Schmidt, 2002).

According to Prasetya (2017), materials that help teachers or instructors carry out the many responsibilities related to education are in form of textbooks. This is why Lee, Messon, and Yau (2012) state that textbooks often include the material that students will need to understand a certain subject. New York State (United States of America) defines textbook as any book or book substitute that a student is required to use as a text or text-substitute in a particular class or programme as the primary source of study material to implement a major part of a State or local curriculum. This includes, but is not limited to, hard-covered or paperback books and workbooks designed to be written in and used up, certain newspapers and news magazines, and manuals (Pittsfordschool, 2016). Courseware is broadly defined as any form of instructional media that is used as the primary source of study material to implement a significant portion of a state or local curriculum and that delivers specific nonsectarian educational content to students via a computer or other electronic system. Content-based instructional resources, such as given in an electronic format, are also included in this description. In the light of this, physical textbooks and digital/electronic textbooks may be differentiated (e-textbook, e-book).

Paper-based (print) textbook: It is common to hear about the history of textbooks beginning with tablets, scrolls, papyrus,

parchments, sheets, and even written words on paper. The invention of paper by Cai Lun in China in 105 AD and the advent of the printing press in China during the Tang Dynasty in 868 AD are two pivotal moments in the history of printed textbooks. China was the site for both of these occurrences (Tsuen-Hsueh, 1985). The typical textbook is made up of pages with text, images, or both that are bound between the front and back covers. It is used more often than electronic textbooks in Nigeria and the rest of the globe. The low adoption rate of e-textbooks in Nigeria may be attributed to a number of issues, the most prominent of which being the country's restricted internet connectivity and government spending on education. College students prefer print textbooks over electronic textbooks because they are more user-friendly, more readable, more portable, and make it easier to highlight (Abuloum, Farah, Kaskaloglu & Yaakub, 2019). Electronic books according to Gracia-Bulle (2019) can cause screen fatigue, which may lead to distractions, blurred vision, redness, dryness, and irritation of the eyes and difficulty in sleeping but printed books are better for the brain and health. Readers of printed books can absorb more information, become better readers, get less distracted, sleep better, enjoy reading and attain higher academic achievement (Howlifeunfolds, 2022),

Digital books: E-books, also known as digital books or electronic books, are a digitised version of the conventional textbook that includes a range of multimedia material such as video, audio, images, and slideshows that can be viewed on-screen (Lee, Messom & Yau, 2012). The contents of an e-book may be viewed on a computer, a mobile device, or a specialised device called an e-book reader. In the light of these factors, Lee et al. (2012) classified electronic books into three different categories: web-based systems, reading software, and specialist devices.

Web-based electronic books may be read online for free or for a fee, and their contents may be downloaded for free or for a charge as well. In addition, the programme may be configured to read information in a number of formats. Additionally, it is present in smart devices, tablets, computers, such as the Android phone

and tablet, the iPad, and the iPhone. For the purpose of reading electronic textbooks, specialised devices employ either e-paper (also known as e-ink) or liquid-crystal display (LCD). These devices feature a variety of key components such as an operating system (OS), display, and network connectivity (Wi-Fi, Bluetooth) (electronic paper, LCD) (electronic paper, LCD).

According to Lee, Messom, and Yau (2012), the key advantages of e-books over printed books are that e-textbooks take up less physical space and are significantly lighter. For instance, fifty electronic textbooks may require up to sixty-four gigabytes (GB) of storage space, but this information can also be stored in the cloud, which offers on-demand availability, facilitates easy backup and replacement, and makes it simpler to create, deliver, update, and distribute its content. However, the bulk of countries are still in the beginning phases of generating electronic textbooks and employing them in educational contexts.

Preference and attitude of learners and teachers to the use of textbook in Social Studies

Teachers and students alike benefit from textbooks because of the wealth of information they provide on the subject matter being covered in class and beyond. It is far more unlikely that effective teaching will take place in the absence of textbooks (Winch, 2019; NERDC, 2013). Although, Cuban (1991) claims that textbooks are mostly used in Social Studies classrooms, Shaver, Davis, and Helburn (1979) argue that teachers of Social Studies utilise textbooks because they see them as authoritative beyond debate. Due to technological advancements and the need to make teaching and learning more child-centered, the use of digital textbooks, especially enhanced e-textbooks, is growing in popularity. As a result, there has been a rise in the number of people buying textbooks in digital format.

According to research conducted by Schug, Western, and Enochs (1997), the vast majority of Social Studies educators rely heavily on textbooks when instructing their students. Educators rely on textbooks if they believe the materials aid students in the

process of learning for many reasons, including but not limited to the following: textbooks help teachers in the process of planning courses, units, and lessons; publishers offer ancillary materials, which may include posters, map sets, colour transparencies, test banks, computer tutorials, and videos; and so on. Chulkov and VanAlsine (2013) and Dobler (2015) highlighted price, usability, accessibility, and longevity as reasons for choosing a certain format for their books.

In 2017, Edmondson and Ward analysed students' opinions on and preferences for the four most common textbook formats. Two hundred and twenty-three undergraduates from a major public institution in the Southern United States participated in the research. There was a clear preference among students for either print or digital textbooks or a combination of the two, as reported by Edmondson and Ward (2017). Hard covers, paperbacks, loose leaf (both bound and unbound) and electronic textbooks are all part of this category. The research outcome shows that students prefer paperback textbooks despite their higher purchase price relative to alternative choices. As students shared their opinions on alternative textbooks, it became clear that cost, usability, health concerns, and desire for ownership were the primary motivators for their preferences and dislikes.

Since textbooks are widely used by educators across all grade levels, and since they facilitate students' acquisition of essential knowledge, abilities, and character traits, they play a crucial role in the educational system as a whole. All educators depend on textbooks as a go-to reference for course content and as a means of establishing mutual expectations for what students and staff should know and be able to teach. People may then appreciate why programmes like those found in schools exist. Textbooks are enjoyed as works of literature and put to good use in the maintenance of educational efforts.

Studies have shown that both students and teachers have different preferences and perspectives on how to best use textbooks in the classroom. In a survey carried out by Shelburne (2009), where 1,547 students, professors, and staff members from

the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign participated, fifty-seven percent of the respondents used e-books and thought they were better than print books in many ways, including saving space, being available at any time, having up-to-date information, and providing greater accessibility. Healy (2002) surveyed 3,200 educators at all levels and discovered that e-books were being used across the board for study, instruction, and research. Considering that e-book sales are estimated to make up to 67% of all book sales in the United States, 7% of all book sales in the United Kingdom and Europe, 6% in Australia, 4% in Canada, and 9% of all book sales in all other parts of the world (Krishnamurthy, 2010).

Challenges Facing Textbooks in the ‘New World’

Both physical and virtual textbooks have their drawbacks when used in today’s classrooms. Although electronic textbooks have become more popular, traditional paper textbooks are still often used in classrooms. Students carrying heavy textbooks in backpacks have been related to the development of scoliosis, a spinal condition caused by an abnormal bending of the spine. This is due to the fact that a book’s spine can support up to seven times its own weight. For this reason, Bauer and Freivalds (2009); and Yeh (2018) advise that students should make use of digital textbooks since they are easier to read, allow faster page turns, and reduce stress on the spine. Tawil (2018) claims that many Egyptian kids who were given tablets at school, used them to watch videos and play games during class but then took them home after completion of studies. Ripples(2016) found that many pupils in the state of Osun in Nigeria utilised tablets provided by the Opon Imo (tablet of knowledge) project to download and watch pornographic films and musical videos.

Some of the problems that arise from the usage of e-books include a poor user interface, the need to log in, digital management problem, and the inability to download or print certain chapters (Rabiu, Ojukwu & Oladele, 2016; Cassidy, Martinez & Shen, 2012). The Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) found that just 12.1% of Nigerians are happy with the

quality of their Internet service (Meaningful Connectivity), while only 6.6% of the country's rural population and 16.4% of the country's urban population have access to high-quality internet service (Adepetun, 2022). A policy framework and Internet access metric for meaningful internet connectivity quality describes the standard of a user's connection to the web is very necessary. Generally speaking, there are four signs that may be used to gauge the quality and usefulness of an internet connection that is meaningful. Included in this group are the availability of a 4G network, the possession of a smartphone, the availability of an unrestricted broadband connection at one's place of residence, place of employment, or place of education, and regular internet use. The widespread poverty in the country, restricted access to the internet, poor funding for educational institutions, and factors related to instructors are other contributing factors in the slow adoption of electronic textbooks.

The Prospects of Textbook as an Educational Resource

When it comes to making sure the curriculum is being followed and students are learning, having the right educational tools is crucial. The use of technological aids in the classroom has been shown to increase students' comprehension and make lessons more entertaining for teachers and students alike. Educational tools let teachers and professors provide their pupils the best education possible (Twinkl, 2022). One may find some of them in places like libraries, schools with resource centres, outdoor laboratories, seminars, publications, and specialised programmes aired on television and other electronic media. (NERDC, 2013)

A textbook, in whatever form it takes, is an invaluable educational resource since it facilitates students' attainment of the system's learning objectives and makes teaching more pleasurable. Therefore, they are the preferred and most often used kind of educational material. Cragun (2007) argues that textbooks often skimp on depth of coverage in favour of breadth of coverage, resulting in a superficial understanding of even the most complex topics. Multiple studies suggest that teachers' heavy dependence

on textbooks is a systemic problem, which Woodward, Elliott, and Nagel (2012) argue merits serious investigation. The quality of classroom instruction and student learning is directly related to the standard of the textbooks used and the supporting materials made available to teachers and students.

Nigeria's usage of digital technology in teaching and learning in pre-tertiary schools came into the spotlight with the launch of 'Oponimo' (tablet of learning) on June 3, 2013, in the State of Osun in Nigeria. The android operating system was used to build the tablet, and it has three distinct settings. The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), eLibrary, and Testing Arena are few of these settings. State Master Teachers have compiled an entire curriculum's worth of lesson plans for 17 distinct disciplines, and they have archived the whole thing on the VLE. Over the last decade, the Test Center has amassed a database of 40,000 practice questions and answers covering all 17 topics on the JAMB and WAEC examinations. There are now 56 textbooks in the e-Library, spanning 17 of the state's required courses. The Ifa Book, the Health Book, the Bible, and the Quran are all featured on the Oponimo, an Android 4.0 PC Tablet that also has a dictionary. Moreover, it includes Brain Training Games such as Tetris, Chess, and Sudoku. The device's internal storage can hold 32 GB of data in addition to its 512 MB of RAM (Iserh, 2019). But its introduction was plagued by problems, including the claim that it was a fraud, a lack of supply to students and teachers, poor implementation, and textbooks inside it that did not conform to texts authorised for use in the national curriculum (Ripples, 2016). Even with their limitations, electronic textbooks and e-learning have raised the bar for academic endeavours around the world, including Nigeria. Many users including the Eko Digital School in Lagos State, Nigeria have attested to ulesson's efficacy in raising their kids' academic performance via the use of digital teaching methods. ulesson is an extensive database of video lectures, tests, and quizzes that can be accessed online. Eko Digital School is a school that never closes its virtual doors, providing a round-the-clock education to every child in Lagos.

It is becoming more likely that printed textbooks, like phone booths and cassette tapes are becoming obsolete as a direct consequence of technological advances and innovations (Engbrecht, 2018). It has been suggested by Lee et al. (2013) that digital textbooks will ultimately replace the paper textbooks now used in schools. The young people of Generation Z and Generation Alpha, who are currently enrolled in K-12 schools who will soon be making transition to higher education institutions, are digital natives, digital literate, and are exposed to information and communication technology tools like mobile phones and tablets at an early age. Similarly, there has been a cultural trend toward using less paper everywhere in the globe to lessen its environmental effect.

Conclusion

Textbooks whether printed or digital are standard work for the study of a particular subject. Given the unpredictable events in society, a good Social Studies textbook must be relevant and current, and must be produced to achieve the purpose of the curriculum. This explains why textbook is reviewed regularly and has several editions. Authors and publishers of printed textbooks must not be discouraged by piracy, poor royalty and high cost of production. Equally, digital textbooks must be protected from piracy and learners must be conscious of the inherent dangers of eye strain, sleep disorder and the distractions from unsolicited advertisements and notifications that regularly pop up during its use.

Way Forward

Textbooks are inevitable educational resources and though there are several drawbacks to it, there is no threat of extinction to the traditional paper-printed textbooks or the modern digital / e-textbooks. The two must be seen as complementary and not competitive. Hence the following are suggested for improvement:

Teachers and scholars should be continually enlightened on how to effectively use textbooks as an educational resource.

Teacher educational programmes, workshops, trainings and seminars should be regularly organized to enhance capacity development and familiarity with the use of technology as a viable and complementary instructional material. Government should increase spending on education in line with the best global practice and should at least spend 15-20 percent of their national budgets on education in line with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended benchmark. The spending must be transparent and must include how to make quality textbooks both in print and digital available and accessible to all especially learners and scholars in the society. Appropriate and enforceable laws that will deter textbook piracy and copyright infringement should be enacted in the country. It will be welcoming if the national textbook policy bill should be revisited and passed into law. Authors, content specialists and publishers should be encouraged and sensitized on the need to move textbook production beyond commercial benefits. Textbooks especially on Social Studies should be directed at creating and reinforcing societal and global knowledge, values consolidation, critical thinking and not just memorization and passing of examinations. It will also not be out of place if scholars especially at the tertiary levels in the country should collaborate to author quality Social Studies textbooks especially under the mentorship of the founding fathers of the curriculum in Nigeria. Libraries especially academic libraries should be well equipped with relevant, accurate and current textbooks both printed and digital. Students and teachers should be enlightened on use of library and its relevance to effective teaching-learning of Social Studies as a means of developing critical thinking and active reading skills needed for the production of good citizenship, high moral standards and improved social understanding in the Nigerian society.

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