

CHALLENGES OF 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION: THE YOUTH AND SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The 21st Century education is characterised by a transition from conventional educational practises of the past to a contemporary methodology. It helps learners gain the necessary abilities to navigate the complex dynamics of society, adapt to the changing demands of the digital era, and prepare for a quickly growing and linked world. The extent of social and moral decline among Nigerian youngsters in recent times raises doubts about the achievement of the goals of Social Studies and its effectiveness in addressing and resolving social problems that arise from society. The report noted that the political, social, economic, and technological institutions are undergoing significant changes, which are impacting the educational focus and presenting more complex difficulties for the Social Studies curriculum. The paper promoted the idea of learning by active involvement with a curriculum that is tailored to the teacher's flexibility and the students' need. Therefore, it suggests a curriculum that encourages the acquisition of additional abilities that will help the learner to acquire knowledge and demonstrate competencies, resourcefulness, and potential.

Keywords: 21st century education, Youth, Social Studies, curriculum

Introduction

Education in the twenty-first century is defined as a change from traditional ways of the past to a more modern approach. It aids the student in learning certain skills required to survive society's diverse dynamics, the changing needs of the digital era, and the preparation for a quickly growing and interconnected world. The enormity of social and moral degeneration among Nigerian youngsters recently calls into doubt the fulfilment of the aims of Social Studies, as well as the efficacy of such a goal in fighting and correcting social problems as they emerge from society. The report stated that the political, social, economic, and technological systems are in flux, resulting in a shift in educational focus and increased challenges for the Social Studies curriculum. The study argued for learning through curriculum engagement based on the teacher's adaptability and the requirements of the students. It thus offers a curriculum that encourages the acquisition of additional abilities that will assist the student in gaining knowledge and demonstrating competencies, resourcefulness, and potential.

Conceptualizing the term Youth

Youth have the potential to be future leaders and play an important role in promoting societal development. They are key contributors to many societal trends and activities, and have a considerable impact on its growth and progress (Olorunleke, 2020). They are the nation's fundamental foundation. Young people are frequently associated with characteristics such as vigour, energy, resilience, autonomy, and high levels of competence. Individuals have a high level of technological proficiency and a strong capacity for engaging in global and intercultural communication, according to Apase and Yawe (2019). The Oxford Advanced Learner's Lexicon (2010) defines "youth" as a period of life characterised by youthfulness, notably the era preceding adulthood in an individual's growth. Youths are

ambitious, wanting to change things as quickly as possible and in the least amount of time. Youth frustration and worry frequently expose them to crime and vices, which can only be avoided by a system that promotes job creation and self-sufficiency. Youth can also be defined as the interval between dependent childhood and adult freedom. The United Nations defines it as someone between the ages of 15 and 24.

Youth of the twenty-first century are markedly different from previous generations. They are sophisticated and technologically smart, and their thirst for knowledge is unrivalled. They think positively and critically about issues that affect them (Llego, 2022). Today, technology is transforming the way we learn, and the rate of change is growing, exposing today's students to a number of problems that make navigating the demands of 21st Century education tough. The Social Studies curriculum is meant to produce meaningful, self-sustaining abilities; yet, it has been suggested that young children's teaching and learning has degraded with time. As a result, the curriculum must be restructured to "factor in" all of the detected gaps.

Youth and 21st Century Challenges

Learning used to be dependent on the ability to recall and regurgitate knowledge; however, it is now becoming more competitive and sophisticated. With technological advancements, it is challenging for learners to stay up with the latest information, abilities, and, most importantly, apply what they learn in real-world situations (Llego, 2022). The necessity for adolescents to learn quickly in order to keep up with the latest information and global challenges becomes critical.

The most prevalent issues confronting today's youth in the twenty-first century include a flawed education system, a collapse in the value system, indiscipline, parental neglect, and a mistaken focus for youth activities, among others. Education is a critical tool for ensuring sustainable development and for pushing the boundaries of knowledge (Abdulkareem, 2011). The effectiveness of education is most visible in its globalised

tendencies, which are characterised by the absorption of instrumental values aimed at supporting the development of productive individuals who contribute to the advancement of their respective nations. The 3Rs (Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic) are not the only goals of 21st Century education. Similarly, crises like as corruption, criminality, indiscipline, and other types of societal vices pierce the education sector. All of this can be attributed to a flawed educational system (Olorunda, 2018). Any nation's curriculum is designed to create and develop individuals, but when it fails to do so, it becomes a nuisance to society, and the temptation to commit crime is inevitable. Jega (2017) thus argued for proper curriculum focus in order to introduce innovation to the educational sector.

Simultaneously, moral degeneration threatens the nation, weakening the socio-cultural system and the place of value among the thronging adolescents. Societal values are critical for any society's survival. According to Agbele (2013), Westernisation is gradually undermining the originality of African culture. The "wantingtobelong" mentality has taken over the disposition of today's kids. Virtues are no longer cherished, and African cultural heritage is dismissed as "ancient/old school/old fashion," eroding the value system (Igwe, 2014).

Furthermore, indiscipline is a cankerworm that has infiltrated the fibre of Nigerian youth. It poses a severe threat to the country's stability. A good academic qualification is useless without a solid foundation of self-discipline. The demand for quick money is related to the issue of indiscipline. They are "mad" about acquiring and sourcing riches. Their goal is to get rich rapidly, regardless of whether it is legal or not.

Overall, the difficulties confronting today's youth cannot be divorced from parental neglect and dereliction. Parents today face a communication and intimacy barrier with their children. The family, as a socialisation agency, has failed to instill particular principles, norms, values, and ethics in children, exposing them to the faults of society (Dangana, 2014). Most parents are so busy that they have little or no time to connect with their children, let

alone attend to their problems when they arise. Poor parenting has a negative impact on victims, resulting in chaos, juvenile delinquency, and morally and mentally unbalanced individuals. For good measure, we should mention that the misplaced focus of media programmes to which youths are exposed contributes to their issues. These unedited and unmanaged shows expose the youth to cultural imperialism. This has tremendously poisoned the brains of the youth and stunted the development of their spiritual-innate abilities (Adeboye, 2019). Through this socialisation agent, the kids emulate negative ideals such as bribery, rape, drug addiction, semi-nudity, arrogance, undue affluence, and so on (Adamu, 2020). All of these have a predominance of negative and violent material, which leads to disordered character and behaviour.

Social Studies Curriculum and 21st Century Strategies

In the contemporary approaches to Social Studies in the 21st century, the curriculum is projected to incorporate the necessary skills and abilities required for students to flourish in a worldwide society. Creativity comprises the cognitive process of re-evaluating information from unique viewpoints, establishing original relationships, and formulating inventive remedies to obstacles. The assimilation of the four key qualities of current education, namely creativity, critical thinking, communication, and teamwork, should be infused into the topics of Social Studies. Social Studies connect learners with the real world. It should re-emphasize team-based projects in which groups draw on one other's talents to address challenges. These skills are supposed to assist the learner in facing challenges that are tough. The curriculum is expected to foster cultural knowledge and sensitivity in the 21st Century groupings. In contemporary times, it is anticipated that Social Studies educators embrace the position of a facilitator rather than a solitary purveyor of knowledge. Consequently, kids are encouraged to possess attributes such as open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, and adaptability.

21st Century education demands for a curriculum that engages and collaborates with the learner. Learners should be able

to work successfully with one another so as to attain a common goal. They should communicate through feedback and evaluation. With the pace at which change is advancing and the advent of technology, learners may efficiently access knowledge and resources that were previously unavailable (Igwe, 2014). What has been taught or learned can be applied by the students. The kids need to have the skill and bravery to question, access and assess situations in order to arrive at the ideal answers. Hassan and Abdulkareem (2002). This necessitates skills, particularly socio-emotional competency in light of the global world and its intercultural diversity.

Conclusion

The youth offer a tremendous opportunity for driving social, environmental and economic progress. It becomes very important that the young ones are adequately empowered with the appropriate skills needed to meet up with the global and environmental challenges as posed by the 21st Century education.

Way Forward

The issues of 21st century education in Nigeria, particularly in relation to the young and Social Studies curriculum, necessitate a multifaceted approach. It follows that the Social Studies curriculum must be updated on a regular basis to cover relevant and current themes such as digital literacy, global issues, environmental issues, difficulties, and sustainable development, among others. Project-based learning and teaching in Social Studies should be encouraged to make education more practical and experiential, allowing students to apply their knowledge in real-life circumstances. In other words, pragmatic learning must be prioritised in the curriculum.

A multidisciplinary approach should be highlighted again in order to allow students to connect information from diverse courses in order to handle personal and societal difficulties while also contributing to the country's prosperity. The Social Studies curriculum should be designed to emphasise critical thinking,

problem solving, and creativity, encouraging students to think for themselves and solve real-world problems.

Again, Social Studies teachers should be specialists, and investing in their training and professional development programmes will not be a waste if they are to be well-equipped to teach 21st-century skills and adapt to new teaching styles and strategies. It is also crucial to highlight that the use of technology in the classroom is critical in the twenty-first century, thus the necessity to integrate technology into the teaching and learning of Social Studies in order to improve effective and efficient learning experiences and to develop digital skills in students.

It is also critical to improve the civic education component of the Social Studies curriculum in order to foster responsible citizenship, ethics, and social awareness among students. Through public campaigns and sensitization, there is also a need to raise public awareness and advocacy about the value of 21st-century skills and the need for educational changes. In keeping with the above idea, agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), business sector entities, and philanthropists must partner and collaborate to provide resources, mentorship, and support for schools and teachers.

Parents are key stakeholders in the field of education; their active participation will be extremely beneficial in building a supportive learning environment as well as achieving and addressing the issues associated with 21st-century education. Furthermore, infrastructure needs to be improved, including access to excellent schools, instructional materials, libraries, internet services, better learning settings, and well-equipped classrooms, particularly in underprivileged areas. It is also crucial to emphasise that, in order for Social Studies education to achieve the desired learning results, the curriculum must promote inclusivity and diversity while representing Nigeria's rich cultural and social aspects.

Continuous research in the areas of assessment, methodology, and educational changes should be undertaken. Assessment procedures should emphasise holistic growth rather

than rote memory, and high-stakes exams should be avoided. The curriculum must be evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that educational policies are effective, as well as to accommodate and adapt to social requirements and ambitions based on research findings and feedback from educators and students. This comprehensive strategy can assist Nigeria's education system in adapting to the problems of the twenty-first century, equipping its youth with essential skills, and fostering a more inclusive and forward-thinking society.

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