

Problems and Prospects of Infusing Cultural Diversity and Inclusion in Social Studies and Civic Education Curriculum in North-Central Nigeria

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Abstract

Social Studies and Civic education curriculum is seen as a veritable tool for inculcating appropriate values, attitudes, skills and knowledge in citizens so that they can be functional and responsible. The study aims at assessing the problems and prospects of infusing cultural diversity and inclusion in social studies and civic education curriculum in North-Central, Nigeria. Through this, we would be able to examine the prevalence of cultural diversity and inclusion, the challenges being faced, benefits and strategies employed to explore these diversities. The research was a descriptive research design of survey type. The population for the study consisted of all basic social studies and civic education teachers across the seven states of the North-Central (Abuja inclusive). The target population was social studies and civic education teachers who were randomly selected across the seven states of the North-Central (including Abuja). The basic instrument was a researcher-designed questionnaire and it was subjected to content and face validity. From the findings, three main teachers' perceptions were acknowledged on the inclusion of cultural diversity in the Social Studies and Civic Education. The study concludes that, Social Studies and Civic Education as a multidisciplinary subject, is uniquely positioned to promote understanding and appreciation of diversity which prepare learners for a multicultural world. Based on the findings, This study recommends the use of collaborative learning strategies to enhance intercultural understanding and making concerted efforts to ensure that Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum reflect the region's rich cultural diversity

Keywords: Cultural Diversity, Inclusion, Infusion, Identity, Basic Curriculum, Civic Education

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Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping the socio-economic and cultural fabric of any society. In this context, Social Studies, as an interdisciplinary subject, seeks to inculcate in learners the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for effective citizenship and societal development. In recent years, the emphasis on inclusive education—defined as the practice of educating all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities in the same learning environment—has gained global prominence. Inclusion in the Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum is critical because it ensures that learners, irrespective of their background or abilities, have equitable access to educational opportunities.

The existence of several ethnic or cultural groups within a society is referred to as cultural diversity (Parekh, 2020). It includes linguistic, religious, cultural, and moral diversity, all of which add to a lively and dynamic atmosphere. In a globalized society where, cross-cultural interactions are frequent in communities, businesses, and educational institutions, the introduction of cultural variety has grown in importance (Hofstede, 2021). However, there are frequently difficulties in integrating cultural variety, such as misunderstandings, disagreements, and stereotyping. When handled well, it also offers chances to promote creativity, innovation, and understanding between people (Berry, 2019).

Cultural diversity and inclusion are increasingly becoming focal points in global education systems. With globalization, societies have become more interconnected, bringing together individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2018). This reality necessitates the integration of cultural diversity and inclusion into educational curricula to foster understanding, respect, and collaboration among individuals from different cultural groups. Social Studies, as a subject that explores human relationships and societal dynamics, serves as a critical platform for addressing these issues (Nieto, & Bode, 2020). Infusing cultural diversity and inclusion into the Social Studies curriculum aligns with educational goals to prepare learners for a multicultural world. Through this integration, students can develop cultural competence, critical thinking skills, and empathy, enabling them to function effectively in diverse environments (Sleeter, & Grant, 2017). However, despite the potential benefits, the incorporation of cultural diversity and inclusion faces significant

challenges, including curriculum rigidity, inadequate teacher training, and sociopolitical barriers.

Despite global efforts to promote inclusion, numerous challenges hinder its implementation in Social Studies curricula, particularly in developing countries. However, the prospects for inclusion, when implemented effectively, promise to transform educational landscapes, fostering diversity and mutual respect among learners. Over the past decade, thinking skills has become a widely discussed issue in improving and developing students' cognitive ability which is a major goal in education policy (Barak and Shakhman, 2018; Curriculum Development Centre, 2022).

Social studies had a relatively brief and turbulent history as one of the core subjects in the school curriculum. The roots of the contemporary social studies curriculum, therefore, can be traced to at least two distinct curriculum reform efforts: the introduction of academic history into the curriculum and citizenship education (UNESCO, 2021). However, Inclusive education is a concept that has appeared frequently in discussions since the 1970s and generally develops within the framework of human rights. It was used as a concept for children with special education needs to benefit from the right to education and to be included in the educational process in the early years (Whitburn & Plows, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

Cultural diversity in education has been widely recognized as an essential element for fostering inclusivity, mutual respect, and national cohesion in multicultural societies like Nigeria. Social Studies and Civic Education as a subject, aims at promoting civic competence, cultural understanding, and social harmony among students. However, the effective integration of cultural diversity in the Social Studies and Civic curriculum in North-Central Nigeria, a region known for its cultural plurality, remains a significant challenge.

Research indicates that the inclusion of cultural diversity in education faces numerous obstacles, such as inadequate teacher training, lack of culturally responsive teaching materials, and curriculum invisibility of minority groups (Banks, 2017; Gay, 2010). For instance, studies by Adedayo (2018) reveal that many Nigerian Social Studies curricula fail to adequately reflect the diverse cultural heritage of the country, focusing instead on generalized and often

skewed representations. This omission not only undermines students' understanding of cultural diversity but also exacerbates stereotypes and prejudices.

Also, Social studies and Civic Education teachers in this geopolitical zone often struggle with effectively infusing cultural diversity in their lessons due to limited professional development opportunities and insufficient pedagogical tools. Ogunyemi (2019) highlights that many educators lack the training to navigate the complexities of cultural inclusion, resulting in superficial approaches to diversity. Furthermore, studies have shown that students from minority cultural groups frequently feel excluded or marginalized in classroom discussions, which impedes their academic engagement and learning outcomes (Adebayo, 2020).

On the other hand, the prospects of integrating cultural diversity in the Social Studies and Civic education curriculum are promising. Scholars such as Falola (2021) argued that a culturally inclusive curriculum has the potential to enhance students' critical thinking, foster national unity, and equip learners with the skills to thrive in a multicultural society. The researcher intended to examine the problems and prospects of infusing cultural diversity and inclusion in social studies and civic education curriculum (in a multicultural society set-up like North-Central, Nigeria) to transform classrooms into spaces of mutual respect and intercultural dialogue.

Objective of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to assess the problems and prospects of infusing cultural diversity and inclusion in social studies and civic education curriculum in North-Central, Nigeria. The specific purposes are to:

- I. Examine the current state of cultural diversity and inclusion in Social Studies and Civic Education curricula in North-Central.
- II. Investigate the challenges associated with integrating cultural diversity and inclusion into the Social Studies and Civic Education curricula in North-Central.
- III. Assess the potential benefits of a culturally diverse and inclusive Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum in North-Central.

- IV. Determine the strategies for effectively infusing cultural diversity and inclusion into the Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum in North-Central.
- V. Examine the current state of cultural diversity and inclusion in Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum in North-Central based on gender.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

- I. To what extent is the current state of cultural diversity and inclusion is reflected in Social Studies and Civic Education curricula in North-Central?
- II. What challenges hinder the integration of cultural diversity and inclusion into the Social Studies and Civic Education curricula in North-Central?
- III. What are the potential benefits of a culturally diverse and inclusive Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum in North-Central?
- IV. What strategies can be employed to promote cultural diversity and inclusion in the Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum?
- V. To what extent is cultural diversity and inclusion reflected in the current Social Studies and Civic Education curricula in North-Central based on gender?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study:

- H₀₁: There is no significant difference on the perceived cultural diversity and inclusion reflected in the current Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum in Ilorin North-Central based on gender

Methodology

The research was a descriptive research design of survey type. It assessed the problems and prospects of infusing cultural diversity and inclusion in social studies and civic education curriculum in North-Central, Nigeria. The population for the study consisted of all basic social studies and basic education teachers across the seven states of the North-Central (Abuja inclusive). The target population was social studies and basic education teachers randomly selected across the seven states of the North-Central (including Abuja). Three (3) local Government Authorities (LGAs) were randomly selected from each of the seven (7) states of the North-central and this gives a total of 21 LGAs. Again, five (5) Upper Basic Schools were randomly picked from each of the three (3) LGAs, and five (5) Social Studies and Civic Education teachers were also involved. This brings the total number of participating teachers to 375. The instrument for this research was a researcher-designed questionnaire. It was subjected to content and face validity by expert lecturers in the Social Science Education and Educational research, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin. Feedback from these experts was used to refine the instruments to ensure they measure what they are intended to assess. The reliability of the instruments was equally determined using a pilot study conducted in five (5) secondary schools outside the selected sample. The results were analyzed using the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient to determine internal consistency. A coefficient of 0.7 or higher will be considered acceptable. While the information on the questionnaire were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and mean deviations, the t-test was used to analyze the only hypothesis.

Results

This chapter examined the findings and interpretations of findings as related to the research objectives, questions, theoretical model and the hypotheses generated in the study. The demographic data were analyzed using the percentage. Item-by-item analysis, mean ratings and standard deviation were used in answering research questions 1- 4, while t-test was used to analyse the only corresponding hypothesis. It's to be noted that only 372 questionnaires (out of 375) properly filled and returned were used for analysis.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by gender

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Male | 163 | 43.82 |
| Female | 209 | 56.18 |
| Total | 372 | 100 |

Table 1 shows that out of 372 Social studies & basic education teachers sampled for the study, 163 (43.82%) were male while 209 (56.18%) were female. This invariably implies that majority of the respondents across the 7 states of the North-Central were female teachers.

Research Question 1: To what extent is the current state of cultural diversity and inclusion is reflected in Social Studies and Civic Education curricula in North-Central, Nigeria?

Table 2: Cultural Diversity and Inclusion reflected in the current Social Studies & Civic Education curriculum

| S/N | Teachers' perceptions on the inclusion of cultural diversity in the Social Studies & Civic Education | Mean | Rank | Decision |
|-----|--|------|------|-----------|
| i. | The Social Studies curriculum adequately represents diverse cultures | 2.56 | 1s | Agreed |
| ii. | Teachers feel confident teaching topics related to cultural diversity. | 2.10 | 2nd | Agreed |
| iii | My courses highlight the contribution of different ethnic and cultural groups | 1.44 | 4th | Disagreed |
| iv | I feel the curriculum acknowledges global issues and diverse viewpoints | 1.90 | 5th | Disagreed |
| v | Students aware that their curriculum includes content from diverse culture | 2.00 | 3rd | Agreed |

Table 2 shows the perceived Cultural Diversity and Inclusion reflected in the current Social Studies curriculum. With an average weighted mean of 2.0, three of the five items have been prioritized as main Teachers' perceptions on the inclusion of cultural diversity in the Social Studies. These are: The Social Studies curriculum adequately represents diverse cultures; Teachers feel confident teaching topics related to cultural diversity; and Students aware that their curriculum includes content from diverse culture. While the above three items were considered to be the main teachers' perceptions on the inclusion of cultural diversity in the Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum, the other two items were considered as their moderate opinions.

Research Question 2: What challenges hinder the integration of cultural diversity and inclusion into the Social Studies and Civic Education curricula in North-Central?

Table 3: Challenges hindering the integration of cultural diversity and inclusion into the Social Studies & Civic Education curriculum.

| S/N | Challenges faced by Social Studies & Civic Education teachers in integration of cultural diversity and inclusion | Mean | Rank | Decision |
|------|--|------|------|-----------|
| i. | Lack of sufficient resources to effectively teach cultural diversity | 2.66 | 1s | Agreed |
| ii. | Some students resist learning about cultures different from their own | 1.32 | 5th | Disagreed |
| iii. | The curriculum materials provided are biased toward certain cultures | 1.84 | 4th | Disagreed |
| iv. | Time constraint limits how much I can cover cultural diversity topics | 2.24 | 2nd | Agreed |
| v. | It is challenging to address cultural diversity without offending some ethnics | 1.94 | 3rd | Disagreed |

Table 3 shows the perceived challenges hindering the integration of cultural diversity and inclusion into the Social Studies curriculum. With a benchmark of 2.0, only two of the five items have been prioritized as main challenges hindering the integration of cultural diversity and inclusion into the Social Studies curriculum. The identified challenges are: Lack of sufficient resources to effectively teach cultural diversity; and Time constraint limits how much I can cover cultural diversity topics. While the above two challenges were considered to be the main problems hindering the integration of cultural diversity and inclusion, the other three items were considered to be moderate.

Research Question 3: What are the potential benefits of a culturally diverse and inclusive Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum in North-Central?

Table 4: Potential Benefits of a culturally diverse and inclusive Social Studies & Basic Education curriculum

| S/N | Potential Benefits of a culturally diverse and inclusive Social Studies & Basic Education curriculum | Mean | Rank | Decision |
|------|--|------|------|-----------|
| i. | Teaching cultural diversity enhances students' critical thinking skills | 1.02 | 5th | Disagreed |
| ii. | Students show interest when learning about different cultures | 1.25 | 4th | Disagreed |
| iii. | The curriculum encourages appreciation of cultural differences | 2.98 | 1st | Agreed |
| iv. | Our curriculum addresses the importance of cultural heritage | 2.00 | 3rd | Agreed |

| | | | | |
|---|--|------|-----|--------|
| v | Teaching cultural diversity in schools enhances national unity and cohesion. | 2.75 | 2nd | Agreed |
|---|--|------|-----|--------|

Table 4 shows the perceived benefits of a culturally diverse and inclusive Social Studies curriculum. With an average weighted mean of 2.0, three of the five items have been prioritized as main Benefits of a culturally diverse and inclusive Social Studies curriculum. These are: The curriculum encourages appreciation of cultural differences; Teaching cultural diversity in schools enhances national unity and cohesion; and our curriculum addresses the importance of cultural heritage. While the above three items were considered to be the main perceived benefits on the inclusion of cultural diversity in the Social Studies curriculum, the other two items were considered as less benefits.

Research Question 4: What strategies can be employed to promote cultural diversity and inclusion in the Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum?

Table 5: Strategies to promote cultural diversity and inclusion in the Social Studies & Basic Education curriculum

| S/N | Strategies to promote cultural diversity and inclusion | Mean | Rank | Decision |
|-----|---|------|------|-----------|
| i. | Integrate multiple cultural perspectives into teaching | 2.87 | 1s | Agreed |
| ii. | Use a variety of teaching methods (e.g., discussions, projects) to teach cultural diversity | 1.95 | 3rd | Disagreed |
| iii | Attending professional development programs focused on cultural diversity | 1.18 | 5th | Disagreed |
| iv | Collaborate with colleagues to improve cultural diversity teaching practices | 1.36 | 4h | Disagreed |
| v | Adapt lessons to reflect the cultural backgrounds of my students | 2.64 | 2nd | Agreed |

Table 5 shows the perceived strategies to promote cultural diversity and inclusion in the Social Studies curriculum. With a benchmark of 2.0, only two of the five items have been identified as the main strategies to promote cultural diversity and inclusion in the Social Studies curriculum. The identified strategies are: Integrate multiple cultural perspectives into teaching; and Adapt lessons to reflect the cultural backgrounds of my students. While the above two strategies were considered to be the main solutions to the problems hindering the integration of cultural diversity and inclusion, the other three items were considered to be less importance.

Hypothesis Testing

In this study, only one null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha levels. The t-test statistics was used and significant difference was observed.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference on the perceived cultural diversity and inclusion reflected in the current Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum in North-Central based on gender

Table 6: Showing the difference in the perception of male and female teachers on cultural diversity and inclusion reflected in the current Social Studies & Basic Education curriculum.

| Gender (students) | N | Mean | S D | D | T | Sig. | Decision |
|-------------------|----|-------|------|-----|-------|------|----------|
| Male | 80 | 18.20 | 3.01 | | | | |
| | | | | 140 | -1.01 | 0.00 | Rejected |
| Female | 62 | 17.12 | 2.74 | | | | |

Table 6 revealed that Social Studies male teachers had a higher mean (18.20 +_ 3.01) than female teachers (17.12 +_ 2.98) on their perceived cultural diversity and inclusion as reflected in the current Social Studies curriculum. Furthermore, a significant difference, $t(140) = -1.01$, $p = 0.00$ was revealed in favour of female students. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that the male and female teachers differed significantly on their perceived cultural diversity and inclusion reflected in the current Social Studies & Basic Education curriculum in the geopolitical zone.

Discussion

This study assessed the problems and prospects of infusing cultural diversity and inclusion in social studies and civic education curriculum in North-Central Nigeria. The three main Teachers' perceptions on the inclusion of cultural diversity in the Social Studies are: The Social Studies curriculum adequately represents diverse cultures; Teachers feel confident teaching topics related to cultural diversity; and Students aware that their curriculum includes content from diverse culture. Folarin, et al. (2021) aligned with this finding by classifying the concept of culture to three main categories, namely: cultural specialties, cultural alternatives, and cultural universals. Cultural specialists are those aspects of culture which only some adults in the society are supposed to know and practice. They often consist of the vocational calling of individual members of the society through which they can earn their living.

Cultural alternatives are different methods and technique of doing things which are accepted by society. Cultural universals are the most difficult aspects of culture to change. They are the ways or patterns of life, beliefs, ideals, customs and traditions which every member of society is expected to practice (Folarin, Olanrewaju & Ajayi, 2021). Banks and Banks (2019) also posited that cultural diversity encompasses the inclusion of different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and social traditions within a unified framework. They further observed that fostering cultural diversity in education is essential to develop mutual understanding and reduce cultural bias. Cultural diversity in curricula enhances students' awareness of global interconnections and promotes critical thinking about societal issues.

The perceived challenges hindering the integration of cultural diversity and inclusion into the Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum: Lack of sufficient resources to effectively teach cultural diversity; and Time constraint limits how much I can cover cultural diversity topics. Falola (2020) agreed with this finding by observing that Cultural diversity encompasses the range of different societies or peoples with distinct ways of life, traditions, and expressions that exist in the country. It includes variations in language, religion, art, cuisine, clothing, and societal values. However, cultural diversity in Nigeria has also been a double-edged sword. While it has enriched the nation's heritage, it has also been a source of challenges, including ethnic conflicts, religious tensions, and political fragmentation.

Aina (2022) also identified challenges such as inadequate teacher training, insufficient resources, and structural barriers must be addressed to realize the enormous benefits. Banks (2022) has argued that Curriculum Design Limitations is another main challenge in infusing cultural diversity and inclusion. The rigid structure of existing curricula often fails to integrate diverse cultural perspectives. Many curricula emphasize dominant cultural narratives, marginalizing minority groups. Resource Constraints has also been identified by Sleeter & Grant (2020) as a major challenge towards curriculum inclusion. They pointed out that lack of appropriate teaching materials reflecting cultural diversity is a significant barrier. This limits the representation of minority cultures in classrooms.

The teachers' perceived benefits of a culturally diverse and inclusive Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum are: The curriculum encourages appreciation of cultural differences; Teaching cultural diversity in schools

enhances national unity and cohesion; and our curriculum addresses the importance of cultural heritage. Aina (2022) aligned with this finding by exploring the potential benefits of a reformed Social Studies curriculum that fully integrates cultural diversity. He asserted that, inclusive curricula improved students' cultural awareness, reduced ethnic prejudice, and fostered critical thinking. He also highlighted the importance of leveraging technology to provide access to diverse cultural resources.

The teachers' perceived strategies to promote cultural diversity and inclusion in the Social Studies curriculum are: Integrate multiple cultural perspectives into teaching; and Adapt lessons to reflect the cultural backgrounds of my students. In support of this finding, Banks (2017), emphasized the need for curricula to reflect students' diverse cultural experiences, arguing that effective cultural diversity infusion enhances critical thinking and fosters inclusivity. He also highlighted the importance of teacher training programs to support culturally responsive pedagogy. Ogunyemi (2019) also explored the preparedness of Social Studies teachers in Nigeria to handle culturally diverse classrooms. Social studies teachers must be adequately trained in multicultural education. Many educators admitted to relying on generalized cultural knowledge, which often led to stereotyping or superficial treatment of cultural diversity topics.

The male and female teachers differed significantly on their perceived cultural diversity and inclusion reflected in the current Social Studies and Basic Education curriculum in North-Central. In support of this finding, Alele-Williams (1987) and Okebukola (2006) revealed that another form of violence promoted over the years by both the masculine and the feminine gender is gender stereotyping. Alele-Williams (1987) described gender stereotyping as the 'hidden curriculum,' which sends messages to girls to conform to role expectations. The traditional sex roles and perceptions in our society generally have enshrined. Salimanu (2015) opined that the differences between men and women are not only biological ones but also in terms of fundamental values and vision on certain issues. Ani (2012) also posited that gender is primarily a social construct and a hereditary phenomenon that represents male and female.

Conclusions

The findings of this study underscore the importance of cultural inclusivity, social cohesion, and equity in curriculum design and classroom practices. The infusion of cultural diversity inclusion in the Social Studies and Basic

Education curriculum is grounded in established educational and sociological theories that provide insights into the integration and management of cultural diversity in educational settings. Social Studies and Basic Education, being a multidisciplinary subject, is uniquely positioned to promote understanding and appreciation of diversity. However, its potential is often undermined by exclusionary practices, limiting its ability to promote social cohesion.

Recommendations

Base on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were offered: Teachers need specialized training in culturally responsive pedagogy to address diverse cultural backgrounds; Providing robust theoretical frameworks for understanding cultural diversity in education-Multicultural education theory and culturally responsive teaching serve as guiding principles for integrating diverse cultural perspectives into the Social Studies and Civic Education curriculum; Fostering respect for cultural differences and promoting social cohesion-This study recommends the use of collaborative learning strategies to enhance intercultural understanding; and Concerted efforts are needed to ensure that Social Studies curricula reflect the region's rich cultural diversity, fostering inclusivity and national unity.

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