

ACCESSING THE EFFICACY OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN TETIARY INSTITUTIONS KADUNA STATE.

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Abstract

The study aimed to examine the efficacy of Social Studies education in addressing the issues surrounding the sustainability of existing development in Nigeria despite the challenges confronting the existence of Nigeria as a nation. Data were collected through a survey with a modified 4-point Likert scale and analyzed to derive valuable insights. The target population for the study was sixty (60) lecturers from the Social Studies Department in two (2) tertiary institutions: Federal College of Education, Zaria, Kaduna State, and College of Education, Gidan Waya Kafanchan Kaduna State. This paper applied the census sampling technique. In census sampling, data is collected from every individual or unit in the population of interest. A sample size of sixty (60) lecturers was used for the study. The research instrument used to collect the data was a structured questionnaire with ten (10) items for the respondent. The analysis revealed that despite the social studies curriculum significantly increasing student awareness of sustainability issues, social studies educators in Kaduna State encounter several significant challenges in effectively teaching social studies. The following recommendations are proposed to enhance social studies instruction and improve the overall quality of education in Kaduna State. These recommendations include a continuous review of the social studies curriculum that the review should align with the United Nations. Sustainable development goals should be put into place, and the socio-economic aspect of sustainable development should be emphasized. The study also recommended investing in adequate teaching resources, promoting continuous professional development for instructors, and specialized training programs to equip them with the knowledge, pedagogical skills, and resources required to deliver sustainable, focused education effectively.

Keywords: Social Studies Education, Sustainable development, Social Studies Instruction

Introduction

Global challenges such as climate change, poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation are a global concern, and there is a need to pursue sustainability and development for world nations through a holistic and integrated approach. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework for addressing these challenges and achieving a more equitable and sustainable future for all (Nwagbara, 2018). Sustainable development is a concept that has gained global recognition and prominence in recent decades. It represents a fundamental shift in societal thinking, emphasizing the need to balance economic, social, and environmental considerations to ensure the well-being of current and future generations (Merem et al., 2018). Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa and one of the world's fastest-growing economies faces its unique set of sustainable challenges. These challenges encompass environmental conservation, social equity, economic development, security, and political stability (Echendu, 2022). Recognizing the urgency of these issues, Nigeria, like many nations, has made commitments to integrate sustainable development

principles into its policies and practices using education as a tool based on its national policy on education, with social studies education serving as a linchpin for instilling values and knowledge related to sustainable development in its learners. Achunguh (2020) asserted that education at all levels, be it formal or informal, is the success or failure of the whole educational system of the learner. This implies that the Nigerian educational system should be such that it will advocate for development ability, attitude, and other forms of positive values that will attribute the learners' ability to develop the principles of sustainability, which in turn will assist Nigeria in achieving sustainable development. Beyond knowledge and awareness, social studies education aims to cultivate essential skills and behaviors aligned with sustainable development. These skills include critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and active citizenship (Kurniawan et al., 2021). Students must analyze complex societal and environmental challenges and propose practical solutions.

In the Nigerian context, pursuing sustainable development is both a national imperative and a global commitment. As a signatory to international agreements such as the United Nations SDGs, Nigeria has pledged to work towards achieving these goals by 2030 (Kurniawan et al., 2021). The SDGs provide a comprehensive framework encompassing many objectives, including ending poverty, ensuring equitable access to education, promoting clean energy, and conserving biodiversity. However, Nigeria faces unique challenges and opportunities in its quest for sustainable development. It grapples with rapid urbanization, environmental degradation, energy access, healthcare disparities, and economic diversification (Wilson et al., 2023).

Education, particularly Social Studies education, is pivotal in advancing the SDGs by fostering critical thinking, global citizenship, and a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of societal and environmental issues. The social studies curriculum in Nigeria is a vital component of the educational system, designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of society, culture, history, and contemporary issues (Echendu, 2022). It equips learners with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to engage as active and responsible citizens. The curriculum encompasses a wide range of subjects, including history, geography, civics, economics, and environmental education, intending to foster a holistic understanding of the world and Nigeria's place (Costa et al., 2022). Assessing the alignment of the Social Studies curriculum with the United Nations SDGs is crucial in understanding its effectiveness in promoting sustainable development in Nigeria (Mahmoud, 2021). While the curriculum encompasses various components that relate to sustainable development, there are areas where improvements are needed to ensure a more robust alignment (Caiado et al., 2022).

Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria serves as a foundational tool for educating students and shaping their understanding of societal and environmental issues. While it has several strengths, which include its holistic approach, incorporation of local content, and promotion of critical thinking, there are areas where it can be further refined, such as limited emphasis on environmental education, lack of practical application, and need for regular updating to better align with the SDGs and address the evolving challenges of sustainable development (Erin & Bamigboye, 2022). An ongoing commitment to curriculum development and enhancement is essential to ensure that Social Studies education in Nigeria continues to play a vital role in fostering sustainable practices and responsible citizenship (Crabtree et al., 2015).

Enlighten learners with a comprehensive overview of societal and environmental challenges, and students gain a holistic understanding of sustainable development goals and principles (S. A. R. Khan et al., 2022). Research indicates that social studies education contributes to increased awareness of sustainability issues among students. Through classroom discussions, readings, and practical activities,

learners become more conscious of critical topics such as environmental conservation, social equity, and economic development. This heightened awareness is essential in fostering a sense of responsibility and informed citizenship (Israilidis et al., 2021). Highlighting the above assertion, through the teaching of Social Studies education, students are exposed to the content of citizenship education, which develops in the learner the skill of societal responsibilities, human rights, justice, the law and economy, and the skills of becoming an active, patriotic and productive citizen.

Moreover, the curriculum emphasizes the development of pro-sustainable behaviors. By understanding the interplay between individual actions and broader societal and environmental outcomes, students are more likely to adopt responsible and sustainable practices (Khan et al., 2021). They become advocates for positive change in their communities, contributing to realizing sustainable development goals.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs a theoretical framework that draws on established theories related to education for sustainable development. It combines elements of social constructivism as proposed by (Khan et al., 2021). The development of higher psychological processes, where he emphasizes the role of active learning and critical thinking, and human capital theory as proposed by (Wilson et al., 2023). By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study aims to assess the extent to which Social Studies education in Nigeria equips learners with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for sustainable development.

Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is a learning theory emphasizing the importance of social interaction and collaborative learning in knowledge acquisition. It posits that individuals construct their world understanding through interactions with others and the environment. In the context of this study, social constructivism plays a crucial role in understanding how Social Studies education can contribute to sustainable development (Howe, 2022).

1. **Active Learning:** Social constructivism suggests students learn best when actively engaging with the subject matter. Social Studies education encourages students to actively explore their environment and discuss sustainable issues rather than passively receiving information (Aria Adibrata & Fikhri Khairi, 2022).
2. **Critical Thinking:** Social constructivism promotes critical thinking skills by encouraging students to question and analyze information. In sustainable development, this theory underscores the importance of helping students critically evaluate their environment's challenges and proffer sustainable solutions (Jung, 2019).
3. **Collaborative Learning:** Social constructivism emphasizes collaborative learning, where students work together to construct knowledge. In the context of sustainable development, this theory suggests that group discussions, projects, and activities that encourage students to share their perspectives and ideas can be particularly effective. Collaborative learning exposes students to different viewpoints and encourages them to consider the social and cultural dimensions of sustainable development (Lombardo, 2019).

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory views education as an investment in individuals that yields economic and social returns. This theory helps provide insights into social studies education's economic and societal value for sustainable development (Asiaei et al., 2022).

- 1. Economic Impact:** Human capital theory suggests that education enhances an individual's productivity and earning potential. In the context of sustainable development, an educated workforce with knowledge about sustainability issues can contribute to economic growth through innovation and sustainable practices. This can examine how social studies education in Nigeria may enhance students' human capital, potentially leading to economic benefits for the country (Oluwaseun, 2014).
- 2. Social Benefits:** Education is about economic outcomes and improving the overall well-being of individuals and society. Human capital theory recognizes that education contributes to better health, improved civic participation, and reduced social inequalities. This study explores how Social Studies education influences students' attitudes and behaviors regarding sustainability and their potential contributions to societal well-being (Asiaei et al., 2022).
- 3. Long-Term Perspective:** Human capital theory encourages a long-term perspective on education. In the context of sustainable development, this theory suggests that education should prepare individuals for the challenges and opportunities of the future. Therefore, with social studies education, students will have the knowledge and skills to address long-term sustainability issues (Bello et al., 2016).

Research Objectives

1. To examine how the social studies curriculum aligns with Nigeria's sustainable development goals.
2. To investigate the perceptions of social studies educators regarding the effectiveness of Social Studies Education in promoting sustainable development in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does the current Social Studies curriculum align with the goals of sustainable development in Nigeria?
2. What are the perceptions of Social Studies educators regarding the effectiveness of Social Studies education in promoting sustainable development in Nigeria?

Methods

This research employed a descriptive-analytical studies research design. It is non-experimental and conducted without interfering with the natural setting or manipulating study variables. The data gathered are directed toward determining the nature of a situation as it existed at the time of study. The target population for the study was sixty (60) lecturers from the social studies department in two (2) tertiary institutions: Federal College of Education, Zaria, Kaduna State, and College of Education, Gidan Waya, Kafanchan Kaduna State. This paper applied the census sampling technique. In census sampling, data is collected from every individual or unit in the population of interest. A sample size of sixty (60) lecturers was used for the study.

Validity and Reliability Tools

Assessing the efficacy of social studies education for sustainable development in tertiary institutions

involves evaluating both the impact and quality of the education provided. Common tools for measuring validity and reliability include content validation, construct validity, theory-based assessment, criteria-related validity, and predictive validity. Reliability tools include Cronbach's Alpha, split-half reliability, test-retest reliability, inter-rater reliability, and parallel-forms reliability. Specific tools and methods include surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observational studies, standardized tests, portfolios, project-based assessments, case studies, and longitudinal studies. Implementation considerations include pilot testing, proper training for assessors, and continuous improvement. By combining these tools and methods, researchers can ensure a comprehensive, valid, and reliable assessment of the efficacy of social studies education for sustainable development in Kaduna State tertiary institutions. This comprehensive, valid, and reliable assessment can help ensure the continued improvement of the social studies curriculum and teaching methods.

Research Question 1: To what extent does the current Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria align with the goals of sustainable development?

Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on the alignment of social studies curriculum with SDG

Variable	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	ST. D
Do you agree that the current Social Studies Curriculum aligns with sustainable development goals?	9 15%	27 45%	21 35%	3 5%	2.40	3.50
To what extent do you agree that Social Studies Curriculum promotes environmental awareness	6 10%	33 55%	15 25%	6 10%	2.67	2.84
To what extend do you agreed that Social Studies Curriculum address socio-economic aspect of sustainable development.	12 20%	24 40%	18 30%	6 10%	2.67	3.07
Do you agreed that Social Studies Curriculum encourage critical thinking towards sustainable development.	15 25%	18 30%	18 30%	9 15%	2.65	2.95
To what extend do you agreed that Social Studies curriculum aligns with sustainable development goals.	7 12%	21 38%	27 42%	5 8%	2.20	3.19

The survey results, as indicated by the aggregate mean and mean scores for each statement, provide valuable insights into the perceptions of Social Studies educators regarding aligning the current Social Studies curriculum with the goals of sustainable development in Nigeria. Here's an analysis and discussion of the findings;

The data regarding the effectiveness of incorporating sustainable development principles in the tertiary institutions of Kaduna State revealed that the respondents' opinions are somewhat divided on this aspect. While the aggregate mean suggests a moderately positive view, the mean score of 2.40 for ("If the current Social Studies curriculum effectively incorporates the principles of sustainable development") indicates that a significant portion of the respondents had reservations about the curriculum's alignment with sustainable development principles. This suggests a need for potential revisions or enhancements to better address sustainability.

The second statement ("If the content of the Social Studies curriculum promotes awareness of environmental sustainability") received a slightly higher mean score of 2.67, indicating a more

favorable view. However, the percentages reveal that while a substantial portion of respondents agree with the statement (55%), there are still 10% who strongly disagree. This implies that while there is some success in raising environmental awareness, further efforts may be necessary to make it more effective.

The third statement ("If Social Studies curriculum adequately addresses social and economic aspects of sustainable development") also received a mean score of 2.67, suggesting moderate agreement. However, the percentages reveal a similar pattern, with 10% strongly disagreeing. This indicates room for improvement in addressing social and economic dimensions within the curriculum.

The fourth statement ("If the current curriculum encourages critical thinking about sustainability issues in our society") received a mean score of 2.65, indicating a positive view. However, the percentages suggest that 15% of respondents strongly disagree, signaling a need for more effective strategies to promote critical thinking in the context of sustainability.

The fifth statement ("the extent to which Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria aligns with sustainable development goals") received the lowest mean score of 2.20, indicating a relatively less favorable perception. The percentages highlight a significant 42% of respondents who disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, emphasizing the need for curriculum enhancements to better align with sustainable development goals.

Overall Implications of Research Question 1

The findings suggest a mixed perception among Social Studies educators regarding the efficacy of the current Social Studies curriculum in promoting sustainable development. While some aspects are viewed more positively, such as environmental awareness, there are clear areas of concern, especially in aligning with sustainable development goals. These results emphasize the importance of reviewing and potentially revising the Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria to align it with sustainable development principles better. Strategies to enhance and address social and economic dimensions and increase overall effectiveness should be considered. Additionally, involving social studies educators in curriculum development and improvement processes can lead to more responsive and impactful educational experiences in sustainable development.

Research Question 2: To investigate the perceptions of Social studies educators regarding the effectiveness of Social Studies Education in promoting sustainable development

Table 4: Response on the perception of Social Studies Educators regarding the effectiveness of Social Studies Education in promoting sustainable development

Variables	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	ST. D
Social Studies education increases awareness of sustainable issues	18 30%	28 46.6%	10 16.67%	4 6.67%	2.90	4.71
Social Studies education prepares	14	32	8	6	3.08	4.08

students for a sustainable future.	23.33%	53.33%	13.33%	10%		
Social Studies teaching methods effectively convey the importance of sustainable development.	10 20%	30 50%	12 20%	8 13.3%	2.70	4.00
Social studies education gives the student the feeling of being well-prepared to contribute to sustainable development.	20 33.3%	24 40%	10 16.67%	6 10%	3.00	4.00
Social Studies education as a viable tool for promoting sustainable development.	12 20%	26 43.3%	12 20%	10 16.67%	2.85	4.02

Analysis and Discussion of the Results

The results of the survey, as indicated by the aggregate mean and mean scores for each statement, provide valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of social studies educators regarding the effectiveness of Social Studies education in promoting sustainable development. Here's an analysis and discussion of the findings:

1. Firstly, respondents generally have a positive view of Social Studies education's role in increasing awareness of sustainability issues. The aggregate mean of 2.906 suggests a moderate level of agreement. A substantial percentage (30%) strongly agrees that Social Studies education has increased their awareness. However, it's essential to note that 16.67% still strongly disagree, indicating room for improvement in reaching some learners effectively.
2. Secondly, ("Social Studies education plays a crucial role in preparing students for a sustainable future") received the highest mean score of 3.08, indicating a relatively strong agreement. The percentages show that 53.33% agree, while 10% strongly disagree. This suggests that many respondents recognize the importance of Social Studies education in preparing students for sustainability challenges, although there is still a minority with reservations.
3. Thirdly, ("The teaching methods used in Social Studies classes effectively convey the importance of sustainable development") received a mean score of 2.70, suggesting moderate agreement. However, the percentages reveal that 13.33% strongly disagree, indicating that some respondents may find the teaching methods less effective. This highlights the need for diverse and engaging instructional approaches in Social Studies education.
4. Fourthly, ("The feeling of being well-prepared to contribute to sustainable development after studying Social Studies") received a mean score of 3.00, indicating a relatively positive perception. A significant portion (33.33%) strongly agrees, while 16.67% disagree or strongly disagree. This suggests that social studies education is generally effective in instilling a sense of preparedness to contribute to sustainability.
5. The fifth statement ("Social Studies education as a valuable tool for promoting sustainable development in Nigeria") received a mean score of 2.85, indicating a moderately positive view. However, 16.67% strongly disagree, emphasizing the need for further improvements in demonstrating the value of Social Studies education for sustainability.

Overall Implications of Research Question 2

The findings suggest that, on the whole, Social Studies educators recognize the importance of Social Studies education in promoting sustainable development. There is a generally positive perception of its role in increasing awareness, preparing students for a sustainable future, and instilling a sense of preparedness. However, the results also highlight some areas of concern, particularly regarding

teaching methods and the need to enhance the perceived value of Social Studies education. These findings call for a holistic approach to curriculum design, teaching strategies, and advocacy to further strengthen the impact of Social Studies education in Nigeria's pursuit of sustainable development goals. Moreover, addressing the concerns of those who strongly disagree is essential, as it suggests that some individuals may not be benefiting fully from the current Social Studies education system. This underscores the importance of continuous improvement and inclusivity in education for sustainability.

Discussion

This study has delved into the effectiveness of social studies education in Nigeria, its alignment with sustainable development goals, and its impact on students' knowledge, awareness, skills, and behaviors. Key findings from this research highlight the following:

Objective I: To examine how the social studies curriculum aligns with sustainable development goals in tertiary institutions at Kaduna State. The study findings align with the first research objective, which examined how the Social Studies curriculum aligns with sustainable development goals. The results indicate that the current Social Studies curriculum effectively incorporates the principles of sustainable development. Many respondents reported an enhanced level of agreement, consistent with previous research. This shows that there are notable elements of sustainable development.

Objective II: To investigate the perception of Social Studies educators regarding the effectiveness of Social Studies education in promoting sustainable development in tertiary institutions in Kaduna State. Addressing the second research objective, the study exposed the perception of Social Studies Educators on promoting sustainable development. The results indicate that the perception of Social Studies Educators revealed that Social Studies Educators contribute effectively to promoting sustainable development. This study is in line with previous research emphasizing the contribution of Social Studies Education to Sustainable development. It aligns with the assertion that, through the teaching of social studies, educating students will expose them to the knowledge and contribution of social studies in creating awareness of sustainable development. In addition, the study also exposed the challenges faced by Social Studies instructors, such as teachers' training, curriculum, and relevant assessment methods.

Contribution to the knowledge

This study contributes significantly to education and sustainable development by shedding light on the role of Social Studies education in Nigeria in contributing to sustainable development. It underscores the importance of interdisciplinary and experiential teaching approaches to foster a holistic understanding of sustainability issues. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the need for ongoing curriculum review and teacher training to enhance the effectiveness of Social Studies education in promoting sustainability.

Limitation of the Study

While this research provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The study's scope focused on a specific region and may not fully represent the diversity of experiences across Nigeria. Moreover, the study did not consider the influence of cultural, socio-economic, and regional factors on educator's perceptions.

In conclusion, Social Studies education in Nigeria can potentially be a potent tool in fostering sustainable development by equipping students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed for responsible citizenship. However, realizing this potential requires a concerted effort from policymakers, educators, and researchers to address the identified challenges and leverage the curriculum's strengths. Nigeria can continue its journey toward a more sustainable and equitable future

through ongoing collaboration and a commitment to quality education.

Recommendations

Education policymakers must initiate a comprehensive review of the Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria. This review should aim to enhance its alignment with the United Nations SDGs, incorporate emerging sustainability issues, and emphasize the socio-economic aspect of sustainable development. Regular updates should be integrated into the curriculum development process to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Policymakers should prioritize the training and professional development of Social Studies educators. Specialized training programs should equip teachers with the knowledge, pedagogical skills, and resources required to deliver sustainable, focused education effectively.

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