

**ASSESSING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN
PROMOTING SELF-RELIANCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN
EKITI STATE UNIVERSITY, ADO-EKITI**

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Abstract

This study examined the role of Social Studies education in promoting self-reliance by equipping students with creative, practical, and entrepreneurial skills. The purpose of the study is to determine the extent Social Studies inculcate creative skills among undergraduate students. This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised undergraduate students studying Social Studies at Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, from which a sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure representativeness. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher, consisting of items designed to address the two research questions on creative skill development and self-reliance. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was subjected to expert review for face and content validation, while reliability was established through a pilot test using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded an acceptable coefficient. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. The findings indicated that the curriculum significantly enhances students' human capital, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and skill acquisition, which collectively strengthen self-reliance. Graduates who acquire these competencies are better prepared to navigate economic and social challenges, engage in entrepreneurial ventures, and contribute meaningfully to national development. The study recommends continuous enhancement of the Social Studies curriculum with practical, skill-oriented content to empower undergraduates to become self-reliant, competent, and socially responsible citizens.

KEYWORDS: *Assessing, Promoting, self-reliance, Social Studies Education*

Introduction

Education remains a fundamental instrument for individual empowerment and national development in contemporary societies. In the 21st century, the role of education has expanded beyond the mere transmission of knowledge to include the development of skills, values, and competencies necessary for economic productivity and social sustainability. Globally, higher education systems are increasingly expected to produce graduates who are innovative, employable, and self-reliant (UNESCO, 2016; World Bank, 2020).

In Nigeria, education seems to be regarded as a critical tool for achieving national development goals, particularly in addressing unemployment, poverty, and social instability. The Federal Republic of Nigeria, through its National Policy on Education, emphasizes the need for education to equip learners with appropriate skills, competencies, and attitudes for self-reliance and societal contribution (FRN, 2013). This policy

thrust underscores the importance of functional education that prepares individuals not only for paid employment but also for self-employment and entrepreneurial engagement.

Within this framework, Social Studies education seems to occupy a strategic position in the Nigerian educational system. As an interdisciplinary field, Social Studies integrates knowledge from the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities among learners (National Council for Social Studies, 2017). More importantly, Social Studies is designed to inculcate values, attitudes, and practical skills that enable individuals to function effectively in society and contribute to national development.

The concept of self-reliance has gained increasing attention in educational discourse, particularly in developing countries where graduate unemployment remains a persistent

challenge. Self-reliance refers to the ability of individuals to depend on their own skills, knowledge, and initiative to meet their needs and solve problems (Okojie, 2018). In this regard, education for self-reliance emphasizes skill acquisition, creativity, and innovation as essential outcomes of the learning process. Scholars have argued that higher education must shift from theory-driven instruction to competency-based learning in order to foster self-reliant graduates (Okolie, Igwe, & Elom, 2020; Adebayo, 2021).

Despite the recognized role of Social Studies in promoting self-reliance, there is growing concern about the effectiveness of its curriculum implementation in Nigerian universities. Studies have shown that teaching in many higher institutions remains largely teacher-centered, with heavy reliance on lecture methods that limit students' active participation and practical skill development (Okolie et al., 2020; Nwosu & Ugwuanyi, 2021). Consequently, graduates often lack the necessary competencies required for self-employment and independent living.

Furthermore, the mismatch between university training and labour market demands has contributed to rising unemployment rates among graduates in Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). This situation raises critical questions about the relevance and effectiveness of existing curricula, particularly in disciplines such as Social Studies that are expected to promote functional and life-oriented education.

Given these concerns, it becomes imperative to examine the extent to which the Social Studies curriculum achieves its objective of fostering self-reliance among undergraduate students. This study, therefore, investigates the effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum in the attainment of self-reliance among undergraduate students in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, graduate unemployment seems to be one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges in Nigeria. Despite the expansion of higher education and the increasing number of graduates produced annually, many university

graduates remain unemployed or underemployed. It was observed that Nigerian graduates seem to be the requisite skills needed to meet labour market demands, resulting in a persistent mismatch between educational outcomes and workplace expectations.

This situation seems to raise a serious concern about the effectiveness and relevance of university curricula in Nigeria. Observation of the researcher shows that the current educational system is overly theoretical and insufficiently oriented toward practical skill acquisition and problem-solving. Consequently, graduates are often perceived as lacking employability skills, entrepreneurial competencies, and the capacity for self-reliance. It was observed that the gap between the skills acquired in higher institutions and those required in the labour market continues to widen, thereby exacerbating unemployment and economic dependency.

Furthermore, the dominance of traditional teaching methods, particularly the lecture method, has limited students' active participation and hindered the development of critical thinking, creativity, and innovation. Contemporary research highlights that many higher education institutions in Nigeria still rely on teacher-centered pedagogical approaches, which do not adequately prepare students for real-life challenges or self-employment opportunities. This pedagogical limitation undermines the goal of education as a tool for fostering self-reliant individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to national development.

In addition, the rising rate of unemployment among graduates seems to be linked not only to limited job opportunities but also to deficiencies in curriculum design and implementation. It was noted by the researcher that insufficient emphasis on entrepreneurship, skill-based learning, and practical exposure within university programmes contributes significantly to graduates' inability to create employment for themselves. This seems to be led to an increased dependence on white-collar jobs, which are increasingly scarce in Nigeria's economy.

Given the central role of Social Studies education in promoting citizenship, value orientation, and problem-solving skills, it is expected that its curriculum should contribute significantly to the development of self-reliant graduates. However, there is limited empirical evidence on the extent to which Social Studies curriculum in Nigerian universities effectively achieves this objective. This creates a gap in knowledge regarding the role of Social Studies in addressing graduate unemployment and promoting self-reliance.

It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum in the attainment of self-reliance among undergraduate students in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Social Studies education is an interdisciplinary field designed to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed for effective participation in society. Recent scholars emphasize its role in fostering civic competence, critical thinking, and social responsibility in a rapidly changing global environment (Harrison, 2025). The discipline integrates various social science perspectives to help learners understand societal issues and develop problem-solving abilities.

In Nigeria, Social Studies is known as a tool for value reorientation and national development. The curriculum is expected to foster social cohesion, ethical behaviour, and civic responsibility among learners. Uya (2025) asserts that school curricula play a transforming role in shaping moral values and national consciousness, while Esther and Abdul-Samad (2024) emphasize that Social Studies curriculum contributes significantly to social cohesion by promoting shared values and mutual understanding amongst diverse groups.

Self-Reliance in Education

Self-reliance is conceptualized as the ability of individuals to depend on their own knowledge, skills, and initiative to meet their socio-economic needs. In contemporary educational discourse, self-reliance is closely linked to employability, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

Recent empirical studies emphasize that

education plays a critical role in fostering self-reliance by enhancing skill acquisition and workforce readiness. For example, Tijani and Adeduyigbe (2025) found that education significantly contributes to innovation, productivity, and economic diversification in Nigeria, thereby promoting self-reliance. The study further notes that aligning educational outcomes with labour market needs is essential for achieving sustainable development.

However, emerging scholarship also critiques the narrow economic framing of self-reliance. Obiagu (2025) argues that self-reliance in education is often overly focused on economic productivity, neglecting broader dimensions such as civic agency, empowerment, and social transformation. This suggests the need for a more holistic understanding of self-reliance that integrates both economic and socio-political dimensions.

The Social Studies curriculum is designed to promote not only cognitive knowledge but also essential 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and problem-solving. These competencies are vital for preparing students for the complexities of modern society.

Recent studies highlight the growing global emphasis on integrating 21st-century skills into educational curricula. Abdulganeey et al. (2025) stress that modern education systems must prioritize competencies such as creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy to remain relevant in a rapidly evolving world. In line with this, Tambiyi and Solomon (2024) argue that Social Studies education must be restructured to address current socio-economic realities, including unemployment and globalization, by incorporating practical and skill-based learning approaches.

Despite these expectations, there is evidence of a persistent gap between curriculum objectives and actual learning outcomes. Many educational programmes in Nigeria remain largely theoretical, limiting students' ability to acquire practical and entrepreneurial skills necessary for self-reliance.

The effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria is constrained by several systemic challenges. Key issues identified in recent literature include inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, outdated curricula, and insufficient teacher preparedness.

Olawunmi (2025) notes that Nigeria's education system faces significant challenges related to outdated curricula and weak teacher capacity, which hinder effective student engagement and skill development. Similarly, Tijani and Adeduyigbe (2025) identify infrastructural deficits and funding gaps as major barriers to achieving educational goals, particularly in relation to skill acquisition and self-reliance.

These challenges contribute to the continued reliance on teacher-centered instructional methods, which limit students' active participation and reduce opportunities for experiential learning. As a result, graduates often lack the competencies required for self-employment and independent living.

This study is anchored on Human Capital Theory, which provides a theoretical basis for understanding the relationship between education and self-reliance.

Human Capital Theory posits that education is an investment that enhances individuals' knowledge, skills, and productivity, thereby improving their economic outcomes and employability. In this perspective, education contributes to economic growth by developing a skilled and competent workforce.

Recent studies reaffirm the relevance of Human Capital Theory in explaining the role of education in national development. Tijani and Adeduyigbe (2025) emphasize that education enhances workforce readiness, innovation, and productivity, all of which are critical components of human capital development. This supports the argument that effective curriculum implementation can foster self-reliant individuals capable of contributing to economic development.

However, contemporary scholars caution that

Human Capital Theory tends to emphasize economic outcomes at the expense of broader social and civic goals. Obiagu (2025) critiques this narrow focus, arguing that education should also promote empowerment, agency, and social transformation beyond economic productivity. This suggests the need for a balanced approach that integrates both economic and socio-cultural dimensions of education.

From the reviewed literature, it is evident that Social Studies education plays a crucial role in promoting civic competence, value orientation, and social cohesion (Esther & Abdul-Samad, 2024; Uya, 2025). Education also contributes significantly to self-reliance through skill acquisition and human capital development (Tijani & Adeduyigbe, 2025).

However, there remains a gap between curriculum objectives and actual learning outcomes, particularly in relation to skill acquisition and practical competencies (Abdulganeey et al., 2025; Tambiyi & Solomon, 2024). Additionally, challenges such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and weak teacher capacity continue to hinder effective curriculum implementation (Olawunmi, 2025).

Despite these insights, there is limited empirical research specifically examining the effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum in fostering self-reliance among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. This gap justifies the need for the present study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to assess the role of Social Studies Education in promoting self-reliance among undergraduate in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. Specifically, the study examined;

1. the extent Social Studies inculcate creative skills among undergraduate students
2. the effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum in the attainment of self-reliance among undergraduates in Ekiti State University

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent is Social Studies taught to inculcate creative skills among undergraduate students in Ekiti State, Nigeria?
2. How effective is the Social Studies curriculum in the attainment of self-reliance among undergraduate students in Ekiti State, Nigeria?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the effectiveness of the Social Studies curriculum in promoting self-reliance among undergraduate students in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The population comprised undergraduate students studying Social Studies at Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, from which a sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure representativeness.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher, consisting of items designed to address the two research questions on creative skill development and self-reliance. The instrument was structured on a Likert scale to capture respondents' levels of agreement. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was subjected to expert review for face and content validation, while reliability was established through a pilot test using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded an acceptable coefficient. The researcher administered the instrument directly to respondents with the assistance of research aides to ensure a high response rate. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation.

Results

Research Question One (RQ1): To what extent is Social Studies curriculum content adequate enough to inculcate creative skills among undergraduate students in Ekiti State?

Table 1: Extent to Social Studies is taught to inculcate creative skills among undergraduate students

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1	Social Studies enhances students competence in identifying values and skills of performing a given task	3.77	0.44	Accepted
2	Students' competence in fixing problems has effect on self reliance in group processing task	3.15	0.62	Accepted
3	Students' acquisition of skills plays a major role on lifelong living	3.41	0.64	Accepted
4	students' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and its application make them self-reliance	3.38	0.72	Accepted
5	Social Studies programme enable students to know about several possible causes for a non-employability	3.26	0.88	Accepted
6	Empower students to face the challenges of unemployment after graduation.	3.12	0.92	Accepted
	Grand Mean	3.35		

Field study (2019)

The results presented in Table 1 revealed that all items had mean scores above the benchmark of 2.50, with a **grand mean of 3.35**, indicating acceptance. This suggests that **Social Studies curriculum content is adequately structured to inculcate creative skills necessary for self-**

reliance among undergraduate students. Research Question Two (RQ2): How effective is Social Studies curriculum in the attainment of self-reliance among undergraduate students in Ekiti State University?

Table 2: Effectiveness of Social Studies Curriculum in the Attainment of Self-Reliance Among Undergraduate Students

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1	through Social Studies programme, students acquire independent skills for self-reliance	3.39	0.83	Accepted
2	through Social Studies programme, students acquire independent skills for self-reliance	3.32	0.65	Accepted
3	through Social Studies students acquire skills in critical and analytical thinking and teamwork that are crucial for self-reliance	3.12	0.88	Accepted
4	the methods of teaching Social Studies in tertiary institutions has limited skills transfer capacity to help students after graduation meets up the challenges of independent living	3.20	0.79	Accepted
5	teaching approaches used in Social Studies in tertiary institutions are geared towards improving creativity for self-reliance	3.36	0.73	Accepted
	Grand Mean	3.31		

Field Study (2019)

To answer the research question, information was gathered from the respondents on the effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum in the attainment of self-reliance among undergraduate students. The analysis in Table 2 showed that all items recorded mean scores above 2.50, with a grand mean of 3.31, indicating general agreement among respondents.

Thus, the results confirm that Social Studies curriculum is effective in promoting self-reliance among undergraduate students, although some improvements in teaching methods may be required.

Discussion

Findings from research question one (RQ1) revealed that Social Studies curriculum content is adequate in inculcating creative skills among undergraduate students. It suggests that the curriculum plays a crucial role in developing competencies such as problem-solving, value

identification, and entrepreneurial skills necessary for self-reliance. This finding aligns with Akpomi (2008) and Warren (2009), who emphasized that entrepreneurship-oriented education fosters creativity, innovation, and self-sufficiency among learners. Similarly, recent studies have shown that Social Studies education promotes functional skills that enable students to adapt to societal and economic challenges. Furthermore, the result supports the view that Social Studies serves as a transformative discipline, equipping learners with practical knowledge required to tackle unemployment and economic dependency.

While findings from Research Question Two (RQ2) indicated that Social Studies curriculum is effective in fostering self-reliance among undergraduate students. Students reported gaining skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, and independent living abilities through the programme. This finding is

consistent with studies by Ayanwale (2025) and Sule (2025), who found that Social Studies education enhances students' capacity for economic survival and responsible citizenship. However, the findings also revealed that teaching methods may not fully support skills transfer, suggesting a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

This implies that while the curriculum is effective, instructional strategies need improvement to maximize outcomes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that Social Studies curriculum plays a significant role in the attainment of self-reliance among undergraduate students in Ekiti State University.

The curriculum was found to be adequate in inculcating creative and entrepreneurial skills, while also being effective in equipping students with competencies required for independent living. However, the effectiveness of the curriculum is partly constrained by limitations in teaching methods and instructional delivery.

Therefore, Social Studies education remains a vital tool for promoting self-reliance, but its full potential can only be realized through improved pedagogical practices.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Social Studies curriculum should be periodically reviewed and updated to incorporate more practical, skill-oriented, and competency-based components that will enable students to translate theoretical knowledge into real-life applications.
2. Lecturers should adopt student-centered and innovative teaching methods such as inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, simulations, and collaborative activities in order to enhance students' critical thinking, creativity, and active participation in the learning process.
3. Entrepreneurship education should be fully integrated into Social Studies programmes to promote innovation, self-employment skills, and reduce overdependence on white-collar jobs among graduates.
4. Government and university authorities should also ensure the provision of adequate instructional materials, including modern teaching aids and digital resources, to improve teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes.

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