

## The Significance of Primary Social Studies Content Organization in Fostering Knowledge, Skills, and Values for Cohesion and Integration in Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

*The field of Social Studies (SS) plays a crucial role in nurturing students' knowledge, intellectual abilities, and democratic disposition, all of which are essential for active engagement in society. The SS curriculum is designed to address the demands, challenges, and aspirations of society, aiding students in developing appropriate and virtuous values. This study aimed to explore the structure of primary Social Studies content and assess its potential for cultivating the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to promote national cohesion and integration. It adopted a descriptive survey design, employing stratified and random sampling methods to select 1,195 participants, including 940 students, 188 social studies teachers, 47 head teachers from primary schools, and 12 Curriculum Support Officers from six sub-counties within Uasin Gishu County. Data collection involved the use of questionnaires for teachers and CSOs, observation guides for social studies teachers, interview schedules for head teachers and CSOs, and focus group discussion guides for pupils. The data was analyzed descriptively and presented in the form of tables, percentages, means, and figures. The study findings revealed that the primary school Social Studies curriculum is well-structured with a systematic breakdown into smaller units that promote social cohesion. Moreover, it aligns with eight national education goals, six of which are closely linked to interpersonal relationships. However, there is room for improvement, and the study recommends the inclusion of areas that have been omitted, particularly citizenship education, to enhance the curriculum's comprehensiveness in educating students about peaceful coexistence. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the necessity for a more holistic approach that encompasses all facets of citizenship education to better equip students for peaceful and harmonious coexistence in a diverse society.*

**Keywords:** Citizenship Education, Curriculum, National Cohesion, Primary School, Social Studies

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The intellectual and moral growth of young people is fundamentally affected by the planning and organization of the social studies content that is taught in primary school. This educational endeavor is driven by a conscious determination, not only to pass on factual knowledge but, more importantly, to implant the critical skills and values that are necessary for fostering national cohesion and integration (Achieng-Evensen, 2016). As a result, the primary social studies curriculum serves as a guiding framework, directing students through a process of transformation that goes beyond academic spheres and aims at building a deep awareness of their role in contributing to a cohesive society.

The social studies curriculum consists of a well-planned variety of educational activities that take place in a classroom environment. These experiences are divided into different modules, as described by Ganira et al. (2018), leading to a carefully designed syllabus. The syllabus functions as a guide for the course material, with social studies as the main topic. According to Matthews et al. (2011), social studies offer students active involvement with their surroundings both within and outside of the classroom. It is closely tied to the understanding of people and their situations. It transmits values, knowledge, and skills that are essential for peaceful cooperation in communities, countries, and the global setting.

According to Boadu et al. (2022), the ideal content for a social studies curriculum would include national goals, objectives, and aspirations in order to make learning outcomes attainable. However, problems arise when

teachers use instructional methods that impede competence-based learning, which in turn leads to a shortage of important skills and value systems that are necessary for a cohesive society (Akala, 2021). These deficiencies are essential for maintaining social cohesion. Inappropriate material creates barriers that prevent individuals from developing the knowledge, attitudes, and abilities necessary for effective decision-making, problem-solving, and the adoption of vital societal values. This, in turn, contributes to a society that is less cohesive.

According to Ross (2020), the content of the Social Studies curriculum highlights the importance of people living alongside one another, possessing a common origin, abilities to communicate, and environment. This is a theme that is emphasized throughout the course. As a consequence of this, the lessons taught in the classroom teach ideals that actively promote the cohesiveness and unity of the nation. The textbooks in the subject of social studies that have been deemed suitable for use in the country by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) have been organized, with each topic flowing naturally into the next. These textbooks are constructed on a basis that begins with the family unit and expands to include schools and communities (KICD, 2017).

In this regard, KICD (2017) emphasizes an integrated approach to inculcating essential social values of respect, unity, love, patriotism, responsibility, integrity, cooperation, and conflict resolution in school programs for learners to become effective citizens. According to Ganira et al. (2018), the SSC offers appropriate social values education to preschoolers through pertinent material, successful instructional strategies, and effective teaching and learning tools. On the other hand, slow progress in values education implementation and unmet expectations might result from poorly coordinated SSC. This study focused on ascertaining how primary social studies content is structured to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, and values that foster national cohesion and integration.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gamage et al. (2021) assert the critical importance of the relevance of primary social studies curriculum content in fostering a sense of belonging among learners to their family, community, and country. They argue that cultivating the right dispositions through instructional content is vital for reinforcing essential social values among primary school learners. Twining et al. (2021) support this perspective, suggesting that developers of social studies curricula should organize content in ways that support learners in developing these crucial social values. When implemented effectively, this content contributes to the growth of citizens who are not only dependable, accountable, reliable, and trustworthy but also conscious of human dignity.

In a study assessing social studies curriculum content in Nigeria regarding learners' appreciation of cultural diversity, Fakuade et al. (2022) reveal that primary school learning begins with learners expanding their awareness of values from the immediate environment to the broader society. Effective implementation of social studies content in the neighborhood, school, and health practices can result in learners becoming more responsible, respectful, and cooperative, impacting their immediate family, community, and beyond. Viberg et al. (2022) argue that learners with appropriate social orientations about their neighborhood develop sensitivity, cultural awareness, values, and behavioral dispositions for effective citizenship. These citizens not only exhibit qualities of dependability, accountability, reliability, and trustworthiness but also demonstrate a consciousness of human dignity. Effective implementation of content related to 'my school' enables learners to recognize people and school activities while developing appropriate ways of caring for institutional property.

According to Ganira et al. (2018), social studies curriculum content plays a pivotal role in helping students develop respect as a social value crucial for in-class interactions and productive citizenship. Relevant interactions foster awareness, values, and behavioral expectations, allowing learners to develop the necessary social skills for survival in the real world and social cohesiveness. Morris (2017) also agrees that respectful students contribute to positive interactions by being kind, avoiding hurtful comments, and upholding standards of decency for societal existence.

Recognizing this, it becomes apparent that social studies curriculum content should be more relevant to students' interactions, with a focus on respect as a crucial life skill for navigating home, school, and society. Risinger (2012) found that the social studies curriculum had not been effectively utilized to equip students with the necessary abilities to foster respect as a positive value. Ghazi (2018) acknowledges that challenges in teaching respect as a value in social studies stem from curriculum content and implementation, teacher expertise, class size, task time allocation, and school regulations. In response, educators must create an environment that encourages respectful exchange of ideas, active listening, and an appreciation for diversity (Ganira et al., 2018).

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. The purpose of this design was to gather data to test hypotheses and provide answers regarding the study's topic. The study used a combination of data collection instruments, including questionnaires for Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs) and teachers, interview guides for head teachers, observation schedules for social studies teachers, focus group discussions with pupils, and document analysis.

The research was conducted in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, which was chosen due to its cosmopolitan nature and the need to improve the teaching and learning of social studies education as a means of developing good citizens, especially in the wake of past civic unrest in the county. The study aimed to examine the connection between social studies education and national cohesion and integration goals.

The study focused on a study population of 467 primary schools to target the head teachers (467), all social studies teachers (4,832) and pupils (98,600) from classes five, six, seven, and eight, and Curriculum Support Officers (40). A proportionate stratified random technique was used to choose 47 schools from six sub-counties, with four instructors and pupils from each school. Questionnaires, interview guides, observation schedules, focus group discussions, and document analysis were used to collect data. In Nandi County, a pilot study was undertaken to validate data collection instruments, and dependability was determined using correlation coefficients. Data analysis employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

### IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Social Studies content structure in promoting National Cohesion and Integration

The objective was to ascertain how primary social studies content is structured to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, and values that foster national cohesion and integration. The following sub-sections contain a presentation of the findings.

##### 4.1.1 CSOs' Perception on the social studies content

Opinions were sought from the curriculum support officers on the extent to which the components of the Social Studies curriculum are instrumental in fostering national cohesion and integration. The responses are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*CSOs' Perceptions of the content of Social Studies Curriculum*

Components	Very Little Extent	Little Extent	Undecided	Large Extent	Very Large Extent
Gender responsiveness	0	2 (20 %),		7 (70%)	1 (10 %),
Human rights and privileges	0	0		4 (40%)	6 (60%)
Social responsibility	0	0		8 (80%)	2 (20 %)
Integrity	0	0		4 (40%)	6 (60%)
Moral values	0	0		8 (80%)	2 (20 %)
Rights and responsibilities of citizens	0	0		6 (60%)	4 (40%)

For the component of gender responsiveness, the majority of CSOs, specifically 7 (70%), reported a large extent of impact, while 1 (10%) expressed uncertainty. This suggests that CSOs believe that gender responsiveness in the Social Studies curriculum significantly contributes to fostering national cohesion and integration. In terms of human rights and privileges, 6 (60%) CSOs stated that it has a very large extent of relevance, and 4 (40%) reported a large extent. All CSOs acknowledged the significance of this component in promoting a sense of belonging to the nation, thereby supporting national cohesion and integration. Social responsibility as a component of social studies is perceived as relevant to a vast extent by 8 (80%) CSOs, with 2 (20%) reporting it to a little extent. These results indicate unanimous agreement among CSOs that social responsibility plays a crucial role in promoting good behavior for peaceful coexistence and contributing to national cohesion and integration. Integrity was reported to apply to a large extent by 6 (60%) CSOs and to a little extent by 4 (40%) CSOs. This finding underscores the perceived instrumental role of integrity in promoting national cohesion and integration in society. Regarding moral values, 8 (80%) CSOs acknowledged its vast extent of relevance, while 2 (20%) reported it to a little extent. This consensus

among CSOs emphasizes the instrumental role of moral values in promoting national cohesion and social integration. The component of human rights and responsibilities of citizens in the Social Studies Curriculum was rated to a very large extent by 4 (40%) CSOs and to a large extent by 6 (60%) CSOs. This indicates unanimous acknowledgment of the relevance of this component in promoting national cohesion and integration. The Curriculum Support Officers rated gender responsiveness, child and human rights, social responsibility, integrity, moral values, and human rights and duties of the Social Studies Curriculum as relevant. Furthermore, the study found that collaborative efforts within a school setting promote unity, and the teaching of moral values facilitates learners' acquisition of the necessary societal values, contributing to cohesion and integration. This consensus aligns with the findings by Ross (2020), who highlighted the importance of emphasizing these components in social studies education to enable learners to develop ideas that promote national cohesion and integration.

#### 4.1.2 Teacher Perception on the social studies content

The study sought to determine teachers' perception on the social studies content. The results are as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Teacher Perception of the content of Social Studies*

Social Components	Very Small Extent	Small Extent	Undecided	Large Extent	Very Large Extent
Gender responsiveness	1 (1%)	8 (5%)	20 (13%)	65(43%)	58 (38%)
Human rights and privileges	0	6 (4%)	20 (13%)	68(45%)	58 (38%)
Social responsibility amongst citizens	6 (4%)	15 (10%)	6 (4%)	61(40%)	64 (42%)
Integrity	8 (5%)	8 (5%)	19 (13%)	42(28%)	75 (49%)
Moral values	4 (2%)	6 (4%)	12 (8%)	56(37%)	74 (49%)
Rights and responsibilities of citizens	10 (7%)	15 (10%)	17 (11%)	51(33%)	59 (39%)

Table 2 shows that a significant proportion of teachers, 65 (43%), reported a large extent of impact on gender responsiveness, with an additional 58 (38%) reporting a very large extent. Only a minimal number of teachers, 1 (1%), indicated a very small extent, while 8 (5%) reported a small extent. A small percentage, 20 (13%), remained undecided. This suggests that a majority of social studies teachers perceive gender responsiveness as instrumental in fostering national cohesion and integration.

In terms of human rights and privileges, a substantial number of teachers, 68 (45%), reported a large extent of relevance, while 58 (38%) reported a very large extent. Only 6 (4%) and 20 (13%) teachers reported to a small extent and remained undecided, respectively. This indicates a widespread acknowledgment among teachers regarding the significance of teaching learners about their human rights and privileges in promoting a sense of care, tolerance, and respect for others, contributing to national cohesion and integration.

The component of social responsibility amongst citizens is perceived as influential in promoting national cohesion and integration. A significant number of teachers, 64 (42%), reported that it influences students to a very large extent, while 61 (40%) indicated a larger extent. A smaller percentage, 15 (10%), reported a small extent, and 6 (4%) acknowledged its relevance to the attainment of the subject's objectives. This underscores the recognition among teachers that social responsibility is an essential component of the Social Studies curriculum for promoting national cohesion and integration.

Regarding the topic of integrity, a notable number of teachers, 75 (49%), reported that it promotes it to a very large extent, while 42 (28%) reported a large extent. A small percentage, 8 (5%), indicated a very small extent, and 19 (13%) were undecided. These results emphasize that integrity is perceived by most teachers as instrumental in promoting national cohesion and social integration.

For moral values, a majority of teachers, 74 (49%), reported a very large extent of relevance, with an additional 56 (37%) reporting a large extent. A small percentage, 12 (8%), were undecided, while 6 (4%) and 4 (2%) reported small and very small extents, respectively. Most teachers acknowledge the importance of the moral values component in promoting national cohesion and integration.

The component of rights and responsibilities of citizens in the Social Studies curriculum was perceived as relevant by a substantial number of teachers. 59 (39%) reported to a very large extent, and 51 (33%) strongly accepted its relevance. A smaller percentage, 15 (10%) and 10 (7%), reported a small and very small extent, respectively.

Overall, 17 (11%) teachers were undecided. These findings indicate that most teachers recognize the relevance of the rights and responsibilities of citizens' components in promoting national cohesion and integration.

The study reveals that all social components of social studies, as perceived by teachers, can foster national cohesion and integration. Teachers play a crucial role in imparting citizenship education to primary school students, emphasizing the need to sensitize the Kenyan citizenry on matters of national cohesion and integration through the social studies curriculum. The study also identified omissions in the social studies education curriculum that could contribute more to fostering national cohesion and integration. The findings align with the role of social studies in developing good citizens, fostering national consciousness, and creating awareness of the need for national unity and moral development, as articulated by Osman et al. (2020).

#### 4.2 Content Analysis guide

The content analysis guide employed in this study revealed valuable insights into the nature and impact of the Social Studies curriculum on national cohesion and integration. The study found that the curriculum is a well-organized sequence of learning experiences, presenting a structured set of units at a specific level in a school setup. This organization extends to the syllabus, which delineates defined topics constituting the subject of Social Studies. Consequently, Social Studies emerges as a subject intricately linked to the exploration of people and their environment, offering learners opportunities to actively engage in effective environmental adaptation both within and outside the school.

The study further highlighted the incorporation of national goals, objectives, and aims within the Kenyan education structure, particularly in Social Studies. Notably, six out of eight national goals explicitly promote National Cohesion and Integration. These goals encompass fostering nationalism and patriotism, promoting national unity, addressing social, economic, technological, and industrial needs for national development, advocating for social equality and responsibility, respecting and developing Kenya's diverse cultures, fostering international consciousness and positive attitudes towards other nations, and encouraging positive attitudes towards good health and environmental protection. However, two goals, focusing on individual development and self-fulfillment and promoting sound morals and religious values, do not directly contribute to national cohesion and integration. The study identified specific objectives within the curriculum that provide learners with opportunities to develop national cohesion and integration. These objectives involve recognizing and appreciating the family and communities, managing the immediate environment, and understanding the structure and functions of the government of Kenya. Additionally, the objectives aim to instill values such as respect for one's own and others' cultures, love and loyalty to the nation, willingness to resolve disputes, and promoting awareness of democracy in society.

Emphasizing the importance of living together as human beings, the curriculum content underscores shared origins, communication skills, and environmental contexts. This inherent value system within the curriculum promotes national cohesion and integration. Social Studies textbooks, as approved by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), are meticulously structured to build on each other in a sequential manner. Commencing with the family unit in homes, schools, and neighborhoods, the textbooks progressively explore religious practices, social relations, cultural activities, resource-sharing, trade, transport, communication, urbanization, citizenship, democracy, human rights, law, peace, and conflict resolution. The study highlights the need for a conscious approach when addressing sensitive topics to avoid political misunderstandings within the educational system. The specific content within Social Studies textbooks is well-stipulated and contributes to fostering National Cohesion and Integration in primary schools. Despite repetition in topics, variations exist based on geographical areas. Each class level from four to eight features a set number of essential issues, with a consistent theme of 'living together' in Africa and the world. The findings align with the findings by Achieng-Evensen (2016) who found that Social Studies curriculum can contribute to the development of responsible and cooperative citizens in Kenya.

#### 4.3 Syllabus

Further analysis of the Social Studies syllabus for classes one to eight showed that the central theme revolves around 'living together' and progressing from the family unit to a broader understanding of the world. This thematic continuity is outlined in the primary education syllabus, volume two (2002).

Additionally, the analysis showed that the primary goal of social studies is to equip young individuals with the capacity to make informed decisions for the greater good as citizens of a diverse, democratic society in a global context (NCSS).

According to NCSS, social studies holds significance for primary school pupils as it serves as a means for them to interact with various aspects of their environment, encompassing the physical, cultural, political, and socio-

economic dimensions, bridging the past to the future. The learning process actively incorporates real-life situations, with teachers adopting the role of facilitators and guides.

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), on the other hand, extends the learning environment beyond the traditional classroom, emphasizing practical application and the development of individual competence. Unlike the knowledge-based curriculum of the 8-4-4 system, CBC focuses on what learners can do, encouraging a learner-centered approach that actively involves students in activities and, consequently, influencing behavioral changes in students, teachers, and society as a whole.

#### 4.5 Discussion

The findings show that Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs), head teachers, and teachers acknowledge that the Social Studies curriculum emphasizes the elements of national cohesiveness and integration. This emphasis on national cohesiveness allows learners to grasp the concepts of good citizenship, togetherness, and unity, forming a foundational framework for promoting national cohesion. To achieve this, the social studies content is structured in a way that the topics flow from family dynamics to broader national issues.

The findings of this study align with the findings of Ganira et al. (2018), who found that the breakdown of small units within the syllabus is identified as a key element contributing to cohesion. This breakdown aligns with the eight national goals of education, with a particular emphasis on interpersonal relationships. The deliberate arrangement of topics reflects a conscious effort to guide learners through the intricacies of living together, fostering a deeper understanding of collaborative activities that contribute to national integration.

Furthermore, the findings support the study by Boadu et al. (2022), who showed that the essential components embedded in the Social Studies curriculum, such as gender responsiveness, human rights, social responsibility, integrity, moral values, and citizens' rights, are highlighted as significant contributors to national cohesion and integration. These components not only impart knowledge but also cultivate a sense of respect, cooperation, and understanding among various ethnic groups. The curriculum, therefore, serves as a platform for nurturing values that are fundamental to building a harmonious and integrated society.

However, the study brings attention to areas omitted in the curriculum, notably citizenship education (Akala, 2021). The absence of explicit coverage of how people can live together in peace and harmony is a notable gap. Addressing these omissions becomes crucial for a more comprehensive and effective Social Studies curriculum that fully aligns with the goals of promoting national cohesion and integration (Ross, 2020).

In conclusion, the discussion underscores the importance of the structured content in the Social Studies curriculum in shaping the attitudes, values, and behaviors of learners. The deliberate focus on collaboration, interpersonal relationships, and the inclusion of essential components ensures that the curriculum plays a pivotal role in fostering national cohesion and integration. Addressing identified omissions will further strengthen the curriculum's impact, making it an even more powerful tool for shaping responsible, respectful, and cooperative citizens in the context of a diverse and united nation (Achieng-Evensen, 2016).

## V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to ascertain whether the main Social Studies curriculum structure, as specified in the syllabus, helps to transmit values, information, and skills necessary for promoting national integration and cohesion. The curriculum, as per the syllabus, stresses teamwork and fosters notions of good citizenship and unity that help foster national cohesion, which CSOs, head teachers, and teachers acknowledged. Six of the eight national goals that are aligned with the minor syllabus units that make up the primary school social studies curriculum focus on interpersonal interactions. The curriculum emphasizes group projects while covering subjects like family and national living. National cohesiveness and integration are greatly aided by elements such as gender adaptability, human rights, social duty, integrity, moral ideals, and citizens' rights. Teachers did note, however, that certain topics, like civic education, were missing that could improve students' comprehension of harmony and promote national unity.

This study's findings emphasize the significance of the Social Studies curriculum's organized material in influencing students' attitudes, values, and behaviors. The curriculum is crucial in promoting national unity and cohesiveness because of its intentional emphasis on teamwork, interpersonal interactions, and the incorporation of necessary components. Correcting the deficiencies that have been found will increase the curriculum's effectiveness and make it an even more potent weapon for forming law-abiding, courteous, and cooperative citizens within the framework of a diverse and cohesive country.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The findings of the study point towards several critical recommendations that should be considered for enhancing the quality of citizenship education in the Social Studies curriculum. First and foremost, there is a clear need to address the observed lack of comprehensive coverage of citizenship education. To achieve this, it is imperative that the Social Studies curriculum undergo regular reviews to ensure it remains pertinent and adaptive to the ever-evolving dynamics of our society. One constructive approach to expanding the curriculum is to incorporate focused content on how individuals can actively contribute to fostering a harmonious and cohesive society through citizenship education. To stay responsive to emerging demands and issues, it is crucial for curriculum developers, educators, and other stakeholders to actively engage and provide valuable input.

Furthermore, it is recommended that instructors of social studies receive specialized training to enhance their understanding and delivery of material related to integration and national cohesion. This training should encompass practical strategies for effectively implementing citizenship education in the classroom. By equipping educators with the necessary tools and knowledge, we can empower them to impart these crucial lessons to their students, ultimately contributing to the development of responsible, engaged, and informed citizens who are capable of actively participating in the betterment of their communities and society as a whole.

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