

A STUDY OF METHODS AND APPROACHES OF TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Social studies is a subject concerned with the study of individuals, communities, systems, and their interactions across time and place that prepares students for local, national and global civic life. It is a core subject in the education system as it gives students the tools to understand the world around them. This subject encompasses various disciplines, including history, geography, economics, political science, and sociology. In teaching this subject, effective teaching strategies are crucial to help the students develop their critical and creative thinking skills, historical empathy, and global awareness, which are necessary to lead their lives successfully in today's complex world. This needs the use of appropriate methods and approaches in teaching social studies by the subject teachers. The teachers should have a positive attitude towards teaching social studies. The present study is an attempt to explore the attitude of secondary school teachers towards teaching social studies in secondary schools. The researchers used a well-developed and standardized questionnaire as the tool of research for collection of data from the respondents. The sample of the study comprises of 180 teachers (90 Headmasters and 90 School Assistants in Social Studies) from 90 selected secondary schools, taking 30 schools from each of the three districts, viz., Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and Anakapalli in Andhra Pradesh using Stratified Random Sampling method. Mean score values, standard deviations and independent t-tests were used for analysis of data. The findings of the study revealed that the demographic variables – 'Gender' and 'Professional qualification' have no influence on the attitude of teachers towards teaching Social Studies in secondary schools. However, the 'School Management' has a significant positive influence on their attitude towards teaching Social Studies. The study suggested that the Social Studies teachers in secondary schools need to improve their pedagogical skills by attending In-service training programs conducted by different academic organizations from time to time. Further, the study suggested integrating technology in teaching social studies in secondary schools.

Key Words: approaches, social studies, teachers, attitude, methods of teaching

Introduction

Education is a systematic process through which a child or an adult acquires knowledge, experience, skills; and develops right attitude towards various aspects of life. It makes an individual civilized, refined and cultured. For a civilized and socialized society, education is the only means. Its goal is to make an individual perfect. Every society gives importance to education because it is a panacea for all evils. It is the key to solve the various problems of life.

Education provides a platform for individuals to interact with peers, teachers, and mentors. It promotes social skills, cultural awareness and the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively with others. It contributes to personal development by fostering self-awareness,

emotional intelligence, and a sense of identity. It encourages individuals to explore their interests, passions and values. It prepares them for their chosen careers and opens doors for their placement in an organization of their choice. Education is a means for individuals to overcome socio-economic barriers and achieve upward mobility.

Secondary education is an important stage of the Indian education system. It is the bridge that connects primary education with higher education. It is at this juncture students decide what profession they have to pursue as their career in future. Secondary Education in India aims at the all-around development of the students along with an understanding of the various vital branches of knowledge. It trains the students to become good citizens and develops in them the democratic principle of the country. It inculcates the feeling of unity in diversity among the students; and informs them how important they are for the social and economic development of the country. It promotes rational development in the students through which they gain practical skills. This is the stage of education during which students learn different subjects like languages, mathematics, physical sciences, biological sciences and social studies.

THE CONCEPT OF ‘SOCIAL STUDIES’

The subject, ‘Social studies’ is concerned with the study of individuals, communities, systems, and their interactions across time and place that prepares students for local, national, and global civic life. The study of social studies helps students examine vast human experiences through the generation of questions, collection and analysis of evidence from credible sources, consideration of multiple perspectives, and the application of social studies knowledge and disciplinary skills. As a result of examining the past, participating in the present, and learning how to shape the future, the study of social studies prepares learners for a life-long practice of civil discourse and civic engagement in their communities. Social studies centers knowledge of human rights and responsibilities at local, national and global levels so that learners can work together to create a just world in which they want to live.

INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE OF SOCIAL STUDIES

The subject, ‘Social Studies’ is interdisciplinary in nature. At the **elementary level**, ‘Social Studies’ includes the interdisciplinary study of history, geography, economics and civics; and is well-integrated with the study of language, culture, visual and performing arts, customs and traditions. At the **secondary level**, students engage in learning social studies through singular, disciplinary subjects as well as interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary ones. There are various names and labels across different states, districts and schools to identify the disciplines, fields, and subjects of a comprehensive social studies education. The courses in social studies include those that study the array of human experiences and the spaces in which we interact as humans.

Social studies can include, but is not limited to, disciplines and courses such as:

- (i) **History:** It includes the study of local and state history, United States history, world history and global studies, African American history, and women’s history as well as other courses about the history of specific groups, regions, and eras;
- (ii) **Geography:** It is the study of physical, environmental, cultural, and human geography as well as courses related to the application of geographic tools (i.e. GPS and GIS);
- (iii) **Economics:** It includes the study of general economics, macro-economics, micro-economics, and international trade and commerce;

- (iv) **Government and Citizenship:** It is the study of civics, citizenship education, political science, local, state and central government, international relations, comparative government, and law and legal studies;
- (v) **Social Sciences:** The subject takes into its purview the study of different social sciences like psychology, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, gender and religious studies;
- (vi) **Ethnic Studies:** The subject considers African American studies, Asian American and Pacific Islander studies, Indigenous studies, and Latin American studies;
- (vii) **Human Rights and Social Justice:** The subject takes into its purview the study of human rights education, social justice issues, international organizations, and genocide studies;
- (viii) **Financial Literacy:** It includes studies relating to personal finance, corporate finance and public finance; and
- (ix) **Contemporary Issues:** They include courses in current events and the study of one or more social studies topics in current contexts.

STATUS OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Several research studies identified Social Studies as an important subject that offers a vision of the value of knowledge. As a school subject, it emphasizes the need for reflective thinking skills and serves the purpose of advocating the principles of democratic ideals and social justice. The studies suggested that social studies teachers, while teaching the subject, should promote the qualities such as autonomy, collaboration and reflection among their students. Over the past several years, there has been a misconception among majority of students, teachers and the public with regard to the teaching-learning of 'social studies'. *Social studies is often treated as a secondary subject*, ranked below mathematics, natural sciences, and even languages with regard to its perceived importance. Social studies is a subject having secondary status in the curriculum, while mathematics and natural sciences enjoy primary status. Majority of parents want their children to study only those subjects like Mathematics and Sciences with an ambitious goal of making their children choose careers as Engineers or Doctors in future. This makes parents undermine the study of an important subject like social studies by their children in secondary schools. They do not realize the importance of the subject, 'Social studies', which is crucial in developing integrated personality among their children and transforming them into responsible citizens.

METHODS AND APPROACHES OF TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES

To make teaching meaningful and purposeful, the teachers are expected to follow different methods and approaches in teaching their respective subjects. There are various methods and approaches that are being followed in teaching social studies by the teachers in secondary schools. These methods are divided basically into two categories, viz., (i) the learner-centered methods and (ii) the teacher-centered methods.

(A) Learner-centered methods of teaching Social Studies

The Learner-centered methods in teaching Social Studies emphasize active student participation, personalization of learning and collaboration. These methods aim to create a learning environment where students are engaged, critical thinking skills are developed, and social and communication skills are enhanced. The following are some of the learner-centered methods used in teaching Social Studies in secondary schools:

(i) Inquiry-based learning

In this approach, students engage in research and investigation to explore social issues and develop their own understanding. It encourages students to ask questions and explore topics deeply. In this approach, teachers act as facilitators, guiding students through research and

analysis. It promotes *critical thinking* and *problem-solving* by investigating historical events, civic issues or cultural dynamics.

(ii) Project-based learning (PBL)

In this approach, students work on real-world problems or projects that require them to apply their Social Studies knowledge and skills. Creating mock governments, community mapping, or historical documentaries are some of the examples of Project-based Learning. This approach helps in developing 21st century skills like teamwork, communication and civic responsibility among the students.

(iii) Flipped Classrooms

Flipped classrooms allow students review content (videos, readings) at home and engage in discussions or activities in the class. Class time is used for debates, simulations and collaborative tasks. This approach enhances *student autonomy* and *active learning*.

(iv) Formative assessments

Regular evaluations help teachers gauge student understanding and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly.

(v) Field visits and Community engagement

Visits to historical sites, government offices or cultural institutions enhance student understanding of different contexts wherein they have to live. These visits connect classroom learning to *local and global contexts*.

(vi) Technology integration

Tools like digital libraries, social media and educational apps are used to support learning and provide access to information. Platforms like Kahoot or Padlet support formative assessment and collaboration.

These methods not only enhance student engagement but also foster critical thinking, problem-solving and social skills, preparing students for real-world challenges.

(B) Teacher-centered methods of teaching Social Studies

In teacher-centered methods of teaching social studies, the teacher dominates the entire class and students remain passive listeners for most of the time. There will not be any student engagement in the teaching-learning process. However, the students are permitted to get their doubts, if any clarified at the end of the class. The following are some of the learner-centered methods used in teaching Social Studies in secondary schools:

(i) Lecture method

This is the oldest teaching method given by the philosophy of idealism. This method emphasizes the presentation of the content by the teacher. The teacher uses question answers to keep the students active in the classroom. A teacher can deliver his lesson effectively, indicating the exact shade of meaning he wishes to convey by his facial expression, gestures, and tone.

(ii) Discussion method

This method has been used in the teaching-learning process since time immemorial. It was widely used at the famous Nalanda University. In their walk, the Greek scholars used to discuss various problems and issues with their disciples. The discussion has been described as a thoughtful consideration of the relationships involved in a topic or problem under study. It is concerned with these relationships' analysis, comparison, evaluation, and conclusions. It aims at uniting and integrating the work of the class.

(iii) Demonstration method

This method works on the principle of activity centeredness. It is a dual process. First, the teacher provides demonstration, following the principle of concrete to abstract. Later, students can replicate the same demonstration.

(iv) Story telling method

Storytelling is one of the most popular methods of teaching social studies. It is an art that enables the teacher to come very close to the heart of the students, and thereby, attract their attention. Storytelling enables the teacher to make lessons lively and exciting to the pupils. Stories of great personalities, reformers, writers, saints, discoverers, scientists, etc., must be told to the students. Storytelling helps in enhancing the interests of the students in the subject. It goes a long way in firing the imagination of the students. This method is more suitable for the students of lower classes.

(v) Laboratory method

The Laboratory Method in Social Studies involves the employment of source materials, supplementary references, mechanical devices, audiovisual aids, and many other life-like activities to supplement textbook instructions and to increase the effectiveness of presentation and mastery. The laboratory teaching mode refers not to a particular place or a special class period but to an activity. The activity can occur in a regular classroom, outside the school, or in a specially designed room. In this method, students manipulate concrete objects, equipment, etc. under the direction of the teacher.

(vi) Team teaching

Team teaching generally involves a group of teachers. The number of teachers depends upon nature and objectives of the course, the size of class and the facilities to be used. Team teaching provides autonomy to each of the teachers to choose their teaching related activities and responsibilities.

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

A review of research studies carried out earlier by the other researchers in the field of Social Studies education has been conducted by the investigators; and a brief summary of the studies is provided below.

Afolabi Olubela & Olufunmilayo Iyunade (2025) conducted a study to determine the effects of mediated teaching on secondary school students' academic achievement in social studies in Ogun state, Nigeria. A pre-test, post-test, control group quasi-experimental design was employed for the study. Six secondary schools (public and private) in Ogun State were randomly selected. Two instruments, viz., Social Studies Academic Achievement Test and the Mediated Teaching Academic Achievement Questionnaire were used for data collection. The hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant difference in the achievement of students exposed to teaching with instructional resources than those students taught without instructional resources. It was recommended that government, school authorities and other stakeholders should provide enough instructional resources for teaching and learning. It also recommended that where the resources are unavailable or insufficient, teachers are encouraged to improvise.

Adonis S. Besa (2025) conducted a study to investigate the extent of utilization and effectiveness of innovative teaching strategies—flipped classroom, personalized learning, project-based learning, inquiry-based learning and jigsaws—in teaching Social Studies and their impact on the development of 21st-century skills, particularly the Four Cs: (communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity). The study was conducted

with the 209 Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Social Studies students of Sultan Kudarat State University – College of Teacher Education located in Sultan Kudarat, Philippines for school year 2023-2024. The study utilized quantitative descriptive correlational approach to determine the level of utilization of innovative strategies, its effectiveness and the relationship level of the two variables. The results revealed that all strategies were satisfactorily utilized, with *project-based learning* being the most employed. In terms of effectiveness, all Four Cs were rated as “very effective,” with *collaboration skills* having the highest mean. A high positive correlation ($r = 0.745, p < 0.05$) was found between the use of innovative strategies and the enhancement of 21st-century skills. The study recommended strengthening teacher training and the integration of project-based and flipped learning approaches to improve student engagement and skill development.

Bethel Chidiebere Uzoagba (2025) conducted a study to explore appropriate methods for building Teachers Competencies for effective Social Studies instruction. It is felt by the researcher that ‘Teaching method’ is a way of planning, editing and execution of teaching properly with the appropriate integration of instructional materials to achieve the objectives or goals of the curriculum at the classroom level and beyond. For the goals of the curriculum to be actualized, it calls for teacher competencies in the use of appropriate methods for goal delivery in Social Studies instruction. The researcher highlighted appropriate methods for building teacher competencies for effective Social Studies instruction. It also looked at the conceptual framework which is the fulcrum in which the wheels of this paper rotate. The paper highlighted the problems of the study with emphasis on the use of non-professionals in the teaching of Social Studies. The paper recommended among others that the services of professional Social Studies teachers should alone be used in the teaching of Social Studies in secondary schools. The study also recommended that for achieving the goals of Social Studies, there is need for the development of teacher competencies and effectiveness in the use of appropriate methods or strategies in the delivery of instruction.

Akubuilu et al. (2019) conducted a study to explore the extent of implementation of social studies curriculum in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. The population consisted of 339 social studies teachers. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviations. Findings of the study revealed that academic qualifications of teachers and location of the school influenced teachers’ ability to implement social studies to a great extent. Teachers in urban secondary schools achieved higher content coverage than those in rural areas. The study recommended the secondary school teachers to pursue academic development to improve their performance. Regular workshops, seminars or on-the-job trainings should be organized by the ministry of education to update the knowledge and skills of social studies teachers in content delivery.

NEED FOR THE PRESENT INVESTIGATION

Conducting research into social studies teaching methods is crucial to create effective, engaging and inclusive learning environments that foster skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and democratic citizenship. Research helps to assess the impact of different teaching techniques such as the Project-based learning or the Inquiry-based learning on student outcomes like knowledge acquisition, skill development and attitude formation. It also informs how to address challenges in teaching social studies, like filtering bias, ensuring cultural sensitivity and balancing diverse topics. Teachers must pursue ongoing professional development to develop a deep understanding of their subject and best practices centered in

research-based social studies pedagogies in order to teach social studies effectively in the classrooms.

The teachers should use innovative methods and approaches in teaching social studies with a view to make the students understand even the complex concepts easily in the classroom. The teachers of social studies should develop a positive attitude and right perceptions towards teaching social studies, following innovative methods and approaches in teaching social studies in secondary schools. It is felt by the researchers to conduct a study on the attitude of teachers towards methods and approaches of teaching social studies in secondary schools. The present investigation is an attempt in this direction.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the present study is to find out the attitude of secondary school teachers towards teaching social studies in secondary schools. The study also aims at exploring teachers' attitude towards methods and approaches of teaching social studies in relation to gender, professional qualification and school management.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses have been formulated for the present investigation:

- (i) There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers towards methods and approaches of teaching social studies in secondary schools.
- (ii) There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school teachers with B.Ed. qualification and those with M.Ed. and above qualifications towards methods and approaches of teaching social studies in secondary schools.
- (iii) There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers working in government and private schools towards methods and approaches of teaching social studies in secondary schools.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to find out the influence of three demographic variables, viz., gender, professional qualification and school management on the attitude of teachers towards methods and approaches of teaching social studies in secondary schools.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to study the attitude of 180 teachers (90 Headmasters and 90 School Assistants in Social Studies) from 90 selected secondary schools located in Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and Anakapalli districts in Andhra Pradesh.

METHODOLOGY

(a) Method of Research

Since the present study involves collecting data with the help of survey, the investigators used Descriptive Survey method for the present investigation.

(b) Sample

The sample consisting of 180 teachers (90 Headmasters and 90 School Assistants in Social Studies) has been selected from 90 secondary schools located in Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and Anakapalli districts in Andhra Pradesh, taking 30 schools from each of the three districts using 'Stratified Random Sampling' technique. In this method, no significant group is left unrepresented and this gives a greater control over the sample. Here, in addition to randomness, stratification introduces a secondary element of control as a means of increasing precision and representativeness.

(c) Research Tool

The researchers used a well-organized questionnaire consisting of 35 items as the tool of research for the present investigation.

(d) Administration of the tool

The tool was initially administered to 20 teachers (10 Headmasters and 10 School Assistants in Social Studies) under Pilot study. The measures of reliability, validity and objectivity of the tool have been calculated. Further, the researchers conducted item analysis for the items included in the tool. Out of 35 items selected for the tool, the discriminating power of 30 items has been found positive and is negative in respect of 5 items. The items whose discriminating power is negative have been removed; and the final tool consists of 30 items, which are foolproof in all respects. The final tool has been administered to 180 teachers (90 Headmasters and 90 School Assistants in Social Studies) from 90 selected secondary schools located in the rural as well as urban areas in Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and Anakapalli districts in Andhra Pradesh.

(e) Analysis and Interpretation of data

The data collected has been analyzed and interpreted using different statistical techniques such as Mean scores, Standard Deviations and t-ratios; and are presented in the following table.

Table showing t-values of different variables relating to the attitude of Teachers towards methods and approaches of teaching Social Studies in secondary schools

S. No.	Variable		N	Mean	S.D.	t-ratio	Result
1	Gender	Male	100	99.30	27.97	0.01*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
		Female	80	99.25	29.04		
2	Professional qualification	B.Ed.	160	99.62	27.96	0.32*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
		M.Ed. & above	20	101.50	24.06		
3	School Management	Government	110	99.05	28.25	2.14*	* Significant at 0.05 level
		Private	70	89.64	29.02		

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of data, the researchers have arrived at the following findings and drawn the conclusions.

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers towards methods and approaches of teaching social studies in secondary schools.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers with B.Ed. qualification and those with M.Ed. and above qualifications towards methods and approaches of teaching social studies in secondary schools.
3. There is significant difference in the attitude of teachers working in government and private schools towards methods and approaches of teaching social studies in secondary schools.

Teachers working in Government schools exhibited better attitude towards methods and approaches of teaching social studies in secondary schools as compared to their counterparts working in private schools.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that ‘Gender’ and ‘Professional qualification’ have no influence on the attitude of teachers towards methods and approaches of teaching social studies in secondary schools. However, School management has a significant positive influence on their attitude towards teaching social studies in secondary schools.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- (i) The study would help the social studies teachers working in secondary schools realize the need for the use of various methods and approaches in teaching social studies.
- (ii) The present study helps the teachers working in secondary schools evolve suitable strategies and techniques in teaching social studies effectively for the benefit of their students.
- (iii) The study would help the secondary school students to have a better understanding of the subject, ‘social studies’ when it is taught using innovative methods and approaches.

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