

Innovative Methods And Practices Of Teaching Social Studies In Secondary Schools

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Abstract

Teaching plays a vital role in the teaching-learning process, fostering the skills of social, cultural, and economic development among children and young people. It is the responsibility of our teachers to instill in the young minds the fundamental social values, including democracy, equality, tolerance, cultural understanding, and respect for fundamental freedom. Social studies 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. The subject, 'Social studies' remains very crucial in the education system; and recent research highlights the need for innovative teaching strategies that enhance students' learning outcomes at secondary level. The teachers of social studies working in secondary schools should have a positive outlook towards using innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies. The present study explores the attitude of secondary school teachers towards innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies. The researchers used a well-developed and standardized questionnaire as the tool for collection of data from the respondents. The sample of the study comprises of 100 teachers (40 Headmasters and 60 School Assistants in Social Studies) from 40 selected secondary schools located in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh using Stratified Random Sampling technique. 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 'Location of the school' have no influence on the attitude of teachers towards innovative methods and practices in teaching Social Studies at secondary level. However, the 'Teaching Experience' has a significant positive influence on their attitude towards teaching Social Studies. The study suggested that the Social Studies teachers working in secondary schools need to improve their pedagogical skills by attending Faculty Development Programs conducted by different agencies at regular intervals of time.

Key Words: attitude, education, innovative, methods, practices, programs, skills, teaching

Introduction

Education is the tool through which our cultural values can be preserved and transmitted to the upcoming generations and may liberate the masses from the clutches of ignorance and prejudices. It makes them aware of their fundamental rights and responsibilities towards their family, society and also towards the nation at large. Education is an effective means of social reconstruction. It is fundamental for achieving full human potential; and developing an equitable and just society. It

helps to increase the productivity, achieve national and emotional integration; and accelerate the process of modernization. The education system in India has undergone several changes over the past few decades. Several Commissions and Committees were appointed to suggest measures to improve quality in education. The National Education Policy-2020 suggested the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure with a view to create a new system that is aligned with the expected goals of 21st century education. It is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive capacities - both the 'foundational capacities' of literacy and numeracy and 'higher-order' cognitive capacities such as critical thinking and problem solving; but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions

In the entire ladder of education, Secondary Education is crucial for students, as it prepares them for higher education, develops in them necessary life skills; and fosters personal and social growth, ultimately shaping them into responsible citizens, who in turn, contribute to societal progress. The curriculum for secondary schools is designed in such a way that there is provision for students to study different school subjects such as Social Studies, Mathematics, Sciences and Languages, apart from their participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

The study conducted by **Duke et al., 2021** reveals that Social Studies is 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 study 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 few years, research has focused on the effectiveness of teaching strategies in the social studies classroom. However, according to a study conducted by the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) in 2016, social studies teachers across the United States rely heavily on lecture-based instruction and textbook readings, with limited use of active learning strategies (**Heafner, 2019**). This study suggested that there is a need for more innovative and engaging teaching strategies and practices in teaching a subject like Social Studies that can improve student learning outcomes in a better way.

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 lifelong 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.

DISCIPLINES AND COURSES IN SOCIAL STUDIES

At the **elementary level**, the subject, 'social studies' includes the interdisciplinary study of history, geography, economics, and government/civics; and is well-integrated with the study of language arts, the visual and performing arts. 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**, including 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**, including physical, environmental, cultural, and human geography as well as courses related to the application of geographic tools (i.e. GPS and GIS);
- (iii) **Economics**, including general economics, macroeconomics, microeconomics, and international economics;
- (iv) **Government and Citizenship**, including civics, citizenship education, political science, local, state, tribal, and United States government, international relations, comparative government, and law and legal studies;
- (v) **Social Sciences**, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, gender studies, LGBTQ+ studies, and religious studies;
- (vi) **Ethnic Studies**, including African American studies, Asian American and Pacific Islander studies, Indigenous studies, and Latin American studies;
- (vii) **Human Rights and Social Justice**, including human rights education, social justice issues, international organizations, and genocide studies;
- (viii) **Financial Literacy**, including personal finance (NCSS recognizes financial literacy as an important course for students, but financial literacy is distinct from and is not a replacement for economics and economic education); and
- (ix) **Contemporary Issues**, including courses in current events and the study of one or more social studies topics in current contexts.

STATUS OF TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The subject, 'Social studies' in Indian secondary schools often faces marginalization, with challenges in curriculum design, pedagogy, teacher preparedness and parents' attitude contributing to its diminishing status. The current status of teaching social studies in secondary schools together with the challenges being faced by teachers in the transaction of curriculum is detailed hereunder:

Curricular Position among school subjects

- a. *Social studies is often treated as a secondary subject*, ranked below mathematics, science, and even languages with regard to its perceived importance.
- b. The curriculum draws from diverse disciplines—history, geography, political science, economics, and sociology—makes it *content-heavy and fragmented*, posing challenges for teachers as well as learners.

Pedagogical Challenges

- a. Teaching methods remain largely *textbook-centric and lecture-based*, with limited emphasis on critical thinking or participatory learning.
- b. There's a *lack of integration of local/community knowledge*, which could make the subject more relevant and engaging for students.
- c. Teachers often struggle with *connecting abstract concepts to students' understanding*, especially in rural or disadvantaged settings.

Role of Textbooks

- a. Textbooks dominate classroom instruction; but they are often *dense and information-packed*, making them difficult to navigate.
- b. There's limited guidance on *how to effectively use textbooks* to foster inquiry and discussion.

Teacher Status and Training

- a. Many social studies teachers lack *specialized training* in the interdisciplinary nature of the subject.

- b. Professional development opportunities are scarce, and teachers often have *limited autonomy or support* to innovate in their classrooms.
- c. In disadvantaged regions, the situation is more acute, with *poor service conditions and limited access to resources*.

Institutional Attitudes

School leadership often contributes to the subject's marginalization. A study found that *heads of schools tend to prioritize STEM subjects such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics*, viewing social studies as less critical for academic success.

Parental Attitudes

- a. 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.
- b. Most of the parents 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.

In spite of the above challenges and constraints in teaching social studies in secondary schools, the quality in teaching social studies at secondary level can be improved adopting innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies effectively.

There's growing interest in *action research* and *constructivist approaches* to improve quality in teaching social studies. New education policies emphasize *critical and creative thinking, good qualities of citizenship, and interdisciplinary approaches in learning*, which could elevate the role of social studies, if implemented effectively.

INNOVATIVE METHODS AND PRACTICES OF TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES

Innovative methods for teaching Social Studies in secondary schools include project-based learning, flipped classrooms, and inquiry-based approaches that foster critical thinking and real-world engagement.

The following are some of the *innovative teaching strategies and practices* that are transforming Social Studies education in secondary schools:

1. Inquiry-Based Learning

- a. This approach encourages students to ask questions and explore topics deeply.
- b. In this approach, teachers act as facilitators, guiding students through research and analysis.
- c. It promotes *critical thinking* and *problem-solving* by investigating historical events, civic issues, or cultural dynamics.

2. Flipped Classrooms

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

3. Project-Based Learning (PBL)

- a. Project-Based Learning allows students work on extended projects that connect Social Studies to real-world issues.
- b. Creating mock governments, community mapping, or historical documentaries are some of the examples of Project-Based Learning.

c. This approach helps to build 21st-century skills like teamwork, communication, and civic responsibility among the students.

4. Role Play and Simulations

- a. In this approach, students re-enact historical events, model UN sessions, or mock trials.
- b. It deepens understanding of *political systems*, *conflict resolutions*, and *historical perspectives*.
- c. This approach makes abstract concepts tangible and memorable.

5. Technology Integration

- a. Use of digital tools like Google Earth, virtual museum tours, and interactive timelines.
- b. Platforms like Kahoot or Padlet support formative assessment and collaboration.
- c. Encourages *digital literacy* and *engagement*.

6. Field Visits and Community Engagement

- a. Visits to historical sites, government offices, or cultural institutions.
- b. Interviews with local leaders or elders to understand civic and cultural dynamics.
- c. Connects classroom learning to *local and global contexts*.

7. Personalized and Differentiated Instruction

- a. Tailoring content to students' interests, learning styles, and abilities.
- b. Use of flexible grouping, choice boards, and tiered assignments.
- c. Supports *inclusive education* and addresses diverse learner needs.

8. Interdisciplinary Approaches

- a. Integrating Social Studies with literature, science, or art.
- b. Example: studying environmental issues through geography and biology.
- c. Promotes *holistic understanding* and *cross-curricular thinking*.

These innovative methods and practices not only enhance academic performance but also foster civic awareness, empathy, and lifelong learning. If you're designing a curriculum or teacher training module, I can help you develop sample lesson plans or evaluation tools based on these strategies.

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. Further, it was 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 are 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.

Akubailo 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

The principles of teaching and learning consider the processes through which knowledge is constructed, produced, and critiqued. Teaching social studies authentically begins with a deep knowledge and understanding of students, the subject of study in social studies, and each subject’s unique goals. 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 practices 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 practices and approaches in the classroom. Hence, it is felt by the researchers to conduct a study on the attitude of teachers working in secondary schools towards the use of innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies. 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 innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies.

The study also aims at finding out the influence of certain demographic variables, viz., gender, teaching experience and location of the institution on the attitude of secondary school teachers towards innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses have been formulated for the present investigation:

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers working in secondary schools towards innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school teachers with an experience of less than 10 years and those with 10 years and above towards innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies.
3. There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers working in rural and urban secondary schools towards innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to find out the influence of three demographic variables, viz., gender, teaching experience and location of the institution on the attitude of teachers working in secondary schools towards innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is confined to study the attitude of 100 teachers (40 Headmasters and 60 School Assistants in Social Studies) from 40 selected secondary schools located in the rural as well as urban schools located in Visakhapatnam district of 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 100 teachers (40 Headmasters and 60 School Assistants in Social Studies) has been selected from 40 secondary schools located in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh 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 33 items as the tool of research for the present investigation.

(d) Administration of the tool

The tool was initially administered to 20 teachers (5 Headmasters and 15 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 33 items selected for the tool, the discriminating power of 30 items has been found positive and is negative in respect of 3 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 100 teachers (40 Headmasters and 60 School Assistants in Social Studies) from 40 selected secondary schools located in the rural as well as urban areas in Visakhapatnam district of 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 Secondary School Teachers towards innovative methods and practices of teaching Social Studies

S. No.	Variable		N	Mean	S.D.	t-ratio	Result
1	Gender	Male Female	50 50	97.70 101.30	28.00 26.52	0.67*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
2	Teaching Experience	Less than 10 yrs 10 yrs. & above	70 30	104.79 88.50	26.38 25.09	2.93*	*Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
3	Location of the institution	Rural Urban	60 40	100.17 103.50	25.43 25.90	0.63*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels

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 working in secondary schools towards innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies.
2. There is significant difference in the attitude of secondary school teachers with an experience of less than 10 years and those with 10 years and above towards innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies.

Teachers with an experience of less than 10 years have exhibited higher level of attitude towards innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies as compared to their senior counterparts with an experience of 10 years and above.

3. There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers working in rural and urban secondary schools towards innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that Gender and Location of the institution have no influence on the attitude of secondary school teachers towards innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies. However, teaching experience has a positive influence on their attitude towards innovative methods and practices of teaching social studies.

Educational Implications

- (i) The study would help the social studies teachers working in secondary schools realize the need for the use of innovative methods and practices in teaching social studies.
- (ii) The present study helps the teachers working in secondary schools evolve suitable strategies 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 practices.

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