

Teaching Ethics and Citizenship in Delta State's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

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Abstract

This study examined the various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria. It employed descriptive survey. The population consisted of 828 management staff and Social Studies lecturers in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State. A sample of 394 management staff and Social Studies lecturers combined was chosen using stratified random sampling technique from the higher education institutions in Delta state comprising universities, and colleges of education. It utilized a structured questionnaire using four-point Likert scale which was validated by three experts from Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka and had a reliability of 0.82, while z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that: the managerial strategies of implementation of school policies enhanced academic achievement of undergraduates and promotes responsible citizenship consciousness amongst staff and students. The strategies employed include safeguarding and utilizing social studies teaching and learning facilities efficiently, anticipation of any innovation that can aid the effective teaching and learning of responsible citizenship, develop efficient social studies school programmes, engage staff and students in discussions on responsible citizenship to clear the ethical and moral dilemmas. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends among others that regular in-service training on school management should be arranged for management staff, Social Studies lecturers and students by the government through the schools' management in collaboration with the Delta State Ministry of Education.

Keywords: Ethics; Moral dilemmas; Social Studies; Responsible Citizenship; Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

1. Introduction

Social Studies is a subject taught from the lower basic education level schools (primary 1-3), through the upper basic education level schools (JSS 1-3). In higher education institutions (HEIs), Social Studies has been introduced as a discipline, field of study, and area of specialization which an individual can study up to the doctoral degree (PhD) level. The teaching of Social Studies in the various levels of educational endeavours, entails the inculcation of values, morals, ethics, norms, including all it takes to be responsible citizens in the pupils/students (Mezieobi & Mezieobi, 2023). In recent times, Social Studies education has been recognized as a crucial tool for cultivating responsible citizenship among undergraduates of higher education institutions (HEIs). In the past, social studies curricula have focused on inculcating knowledge about events of the past, present and future, political systems, and societal structures. Irrespective of the above fact, there has been an increased recognition that merely transmitting factual information is not sufficient for nurturing the skills and dispositions essential for responsible citizenship (Parker, 2023). In teaching responsible citizenship through the promotion of the effective and efficient teaching and learning of social studies in higher education institutions (HEIs), one would be able to strategically navigate and quench ethical and moral dilemmas.

Responsible citizenship is a critical aspect of a well-functioning society, and Social Studies education plays an essential role in nurturing and developing these essential traits in undergraduates of higher education institutions (universities, and colleges of education) where social studies programmes are offered as areas of specialization, course of study, or discipline.

In any discourse on moral dilemma, scholars and writers think of what is good or bad in the society, how best to promote morals, and how best to discard immorals (Ukaigwe & Mbaonu, 2018; Ogbonnaya, 2020). Furthermore, the term moral dilemmas are perceived to be hypothetical or real-life issues that present human beings with conflicting moral imperatives, where there is no clear right or wrong answers to societal questions (Adeniji, Mohammed & Anyanwu, 2025). These scenarios are often competing ethical principles or values, which coerce human beings to make difficult choices and justify their decisions (Akanni, 2019). By getting involved with moral dilemmas, undergraduates of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State in particular, and Nigeria in general are challenged to struggle with complex issues, consider multiple perspectives, and develop their moral and reflective reasoning skills.

Responsible citizenship has been recognized as very important aspect of social studies teaching and learning in higher education institutions (HEIs). With responsible



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citizenship as core of social studies teaching and learning, traditional approaches to social studies education often fall short in developing the critical thinking and ethical decision-making skills that are essential for undergraduates to navigate complex societal problems. Several Social Studies curricula focus mainly on rote memorization of facts and figures, avoiding the development of higher-order thinking skills and moral reasoning abilities (Adeniji, Mohammed & Anyanwu, 2025).

The gap that has been created in social studies education can lead to a citizenry ill-equipped to address the multifaceted issues of modern Nigerian society. Also, the lack of empirical research on the effectiveness of moral dilemma-based activities in promoting responsible citizenship, particularly in the Nigerian context has led to moral decadence where in contemporary times, social vices like kidnapping, armed robbery, ritual killing, cyber-crime, terrorism, sexual harassment, domestic violence, character assassination, corruption, embezzlement of public funds, misappropriation, budget padding, and soon have become the order of the day. This has also caused increased rate of insecurity in Delta state in particular and other parts of Nigeria. Therefore, the current study aims to address this gap by investigating the various ways of navigating ethical and moral dilemma through the teaching and learning of responsible citizenship in social studies classrooms in higher education institutions in Delta State (Okobia & Mezieobi, 2023; Adeniji, Mohammed & Anyanwu, 2025).

Furthermore, this current study will contribute to the growing pieces of research on the pedagogical approaches, strategies, and methods that can effectively nurture responsible citizenship among undergraduates of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta state. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for higher education institutions (HEIs) and policymakers in Delta State in particular and Nigeria in general, informing Social Studies curriculum development, Social Studies teacher training, and the implementation of innovative Social Studies teaching methods like Enter Educate, Flexible Scheduling, Concept Mapping, Computer Assisted Instruction, and so on (Mezieobi, Fubara & Mezieobi, 2018) to better equip undergraduates of social studies with the essential skills and dispositions to active, responsible, engaged, and digital citizens (Ossai, 2025).

A responsible citizenship is the act of a citizen possessing all the tenets of a good citizen. A responsible citizen adheres to the laid down rules and regulations of the society and understands his or her civic responsibilities, privileges and obligations to the state. He or she will not engage in activities that will undermine the peace, security, and integrity of the state. Responsible citizenship has garnered overwhelming attention in contemporary times, with educationists and researchers alike recognizing its importance in fostering a well-functioning and cohesive Nigerian society. Responsible



citizenship is a multifaceted set of features, characteristics, including civic engagement, ethical behaviour, critical thinking, respect for diversity, and a commitment to democratic principles and societal well-being (Oyekan, 2016). In response to this challenge of Social Studies promoting responsible citizenship through the campaign against ethical and moral dilemmas, educationists and researchers have explored innovative pedagogical approaches, and methods that actively engage undergraduates of higher education institutions in struggling with complex moral and ethical dilemmas. Moral dilemmas are hypothetical playgrounds that present ethical principles or values, that do not agree with existing perspectives forcing human beings to weigh competing considerations and make difficult choices (Olawale, 2018). This study therefore aims at examining the various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, it will examine the impact of the activities that fostering responsible citizenship among undergraduates of higher education institutions in Delta state, Nigeria. By engaging undergraduates in moral dilemma events, educationists can create opportunities for these undergraduates to engage in real-world ethical challenges, analyse complex situations from multiple angles, and develop a deeper sense of the responsibilities and obligations associated with responsible citizenship in the state. These engagements can potentially enhance, advance and develop undergraduates' critical thinking, empathy, and decision-making skills, enabling them to navigate the difficulties of contemporary societies more effectively and efficiently.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the various steps and efforts of higher education institutions (HEIs) in ensuring that adequate teaching and learning of social studies for responsible citizenship is achieved, ethical and moral dilemmas still persist. There are lots of social vices that have bedevilled the development of higher education institutions in Delta state in particular, and Nigeria in general. Some of these social vices like campus cultism, bribery and corruption in form of sorting of courses for higher grades, sexual harassment involving the lecturers and undergraduates, bias, denial, victimization, gender discrimination has sustained ethical and moral dilemmas. Social studies is a discipline that has the responsibility of enlightening, and sensitizing both lecturers and undergraduates on how to be responsible citizens, thereby understanding their privileges, and obligations to the state, adhering to rules, and regulations guiding the state. This will also involve understanding ethics, and moral, inculcating values in the undergraduates so that they can be better and responsible citizens when they finally graduate, and are launched into the wider society. Therefore, this paper examines the



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various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives include:

1. Determine how ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies can assist in teaching responsible citizenship in HEIs in Delta State.
2. Identify the various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions

In the light of these objectives, the following research questions were raised:

1. How can ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies assist in teaching responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State?
2. What are the various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State?

1.4 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of how can ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies assist in teaching responsible citizenship in urban and rural higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in urban and rural higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State.

2. Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study and the population comprise of 828 management staff and Social Studies lecturers serving in rural and urban higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State. A sample of 394 management staff and Social Studies lecturers combined was chosen using stratified random



sampling technique from the higher education institutions in Delta state comprising universities, and colleges of education. It utilized a structured questionnaire using four point Likert scale: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly disagree. This was validated by three experts, two from Social Studies Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all from the Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka and had a reliability of 0.82. Mean and rank order scores were used to analyse the research questions, while z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

2. Results

Research Questions one: How can ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies assist in teaching responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State?

Table 1:

Ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies assist in teaching responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs):

S/N	X1	XD1	X2	ΣX	Rank	Decision	
						Urban (n= 230)	
						Rural (n=162)	
1. The social studies lecturer displays the teaching materials with diagrams		2.47		0.97	2.39	0.92	2.43 9th disagreed
2. Building upon existing ethics and morals in the society		3.68		0.65	3.75	0.57	3.72 1st agree
3. Maintains minimum standard within and around the HEI environment		2.93		0.94	2.87	0.97	2.90 4th disagree
4. Brings about openness in management of values in undergraduates		2.51		1.17	2.42	1.18	2.47 8th disagree
5. Promotes ethical and moral consciousness amongst staff and undergraduates		3.00		1.92	3.01	1.00	3.00 3rd agreed
6. Ensures management's commitment to continuously improve teaching and learning situations		2.71		1.02	2.36	1.04	2.68 6th agreed
7. Leads to continuity of organizational processes		2.86		1.01	2.81	1.03	2.83 5th agreed
8. Sets direct clear ethical and		3.59		0.63	3.58	0.63	3.58 2nd agree



moral standards							
9. Brings about continuous improvement in teaching responsible citizenship through social studies	2.57	1.04	2.58	1.04	2.58	7th	agreed
Total	2.92	0.93	2.89	0.93	2.91		agreed

When the responses of management staff and social studies lecturers in urban and rural HEIs were subjected to statistical analysis on how can ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies assist in teaching responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State; respondents agreed that Sets direct clear ethical and moral standards (3.58), Ensures management's commitment to continuously improve teaching and learning situations (2.68), Brings about continuous improvement in teaching responsible citizenship through social studies (2.58), Building upon existing ethics and morals in the society (3.72), and Maintains minimum standard within and around the HEI environment (2.90). It was also agreed that continuity of organizational processes (2.83) and Promotion of ethical and moral consciousness amongst staff and undergraduates (3.00) were how ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies can assist in teaching responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State.

Research question two:

What are the various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State?

Table 2:

Various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs).

Various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs)	Urban (n=230)		Rural (n=162)			Rank order	Decision
	X1	SD1	X2	SD2	ΣX		
10. Setting clear ethical and moral standards for responsible citizenship	2.67	1.06	2.65	1.04	2.66	5th	agreed
11. Ensuring regular value orientation Programmes	2.95	1.08	2.93	1.04	2.94	1st	agreed
12. Regular ethical and moral updates	2.69	0.99	2.71	0.99	2.70	4th	agreed



13. Provision of adequate materials for the effective teaching of responsible citizenship through the instrumentality of social studies conscious staff	2.80	1.05	2.81	1.07	2.81	3rd	agreed
14. Regular ethical and moral trainings for management staff, and social studies lecturers	2.87	1.00	2.98	0.93	2.92	2nd	agreed
15. Involving undergraduates' in Setting ethical and moral standards in HEIs	2.55	0.98	2.56	0.94	2.55	6th	agreed
16. Provision of institutional guidelines, and principles	2.69	0.99	2.72	0.97	2.70	4th	agreed

When the opinion of management staff and social studies lecturers in urban and rural HEIs was analysed, it was agreed that setting clear ethical and moral standards for responsible citizenship (2.66), ensuring regular value orientation programmes (2.94), regular ethical and moral updates (2.70), provision of institutional guidelines, and principles (2.70), regular ethical and moral trainings for management staff, and social studies lecturers (2.92), involving undergraduates' in setting ethical and moral standards in HEIs (2.55), and provision of adequate materials for the effective teaching of responsible citizenship through the instrumentality of social studies conscious staff (2.81) were all Various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs). In addition, a grand mean of 2.75 was obtained which revealed that the strategies were accepted.

Test of hypotheses

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of how ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies can assist in teaching responsible citizenship in urban and rural higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 3:



Z-test analysis of the difference between the mean ratings of how ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies can assist in teaching responsible citizenship in urban and rural higher education institutions (HEIs)

location	N	mean	sd	Df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Urban	230	2.63	1.06	390	0.19	1.960	Accepted
Rural	162	2.66	1.04				

As shown from table 3, when the mean values of respondents in urban HEIs (2.63), and those from rural HEIs (2.66) was subjected to independent sample Z-test, the result revealed that a Z-calculated value of 0.19 was obtained which was lesser than the Z-critical value of 1.960. This therefore indicates that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of how ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies can assist in teaching responsible citizenship in urban and rural higher education institutions (HEIs). The null hypothesis was therefore retained.

Hypothesis Two:

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in urban and rural higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 4:

Z-test analysis of the difference between the mean scores of various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in urban and rural higher education institutions (HEIs)

Location	N	Mean	SD	Df	Z-Cal	Z-Crit	Decision
Urban	230	2.75	0.98	390	0.68	1.960	Accepted
Rural	162	2.74	1.03				

As shown from table 4, when the mean values of respondents in urban HEIs (2.75), and those from rural HEIs (2.74) were subjected to independent sample Z-test, the result revealed that a Z-calculated value of 0.68 was obtained which was lesser than the Z-critical value of 1.960. This therefore indicates that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in urban and rural higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria.

3. Discussion of findings



As analysed on table 1, the findings of research question one reveals that the ways ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies can assist in teaching responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State are, the social studies lecturer displays the teaching materials with diagrams, building upon existing ethics and morals in the society, maintains minimum standard within and around the HEI environment, brings about openness in management of values in undergraduates, promotes ethical and moral consciousness amongst staff and undergraduates, ensures management's commitment to continuously improve teaching and learning situations, leads to continuity of organizational processes, sets direct clear ethical and moral standards, and brings about continuous improvement in teaching responsible citizenship through social studies (Ojonua, 2015; Mezieobi & Mezieobi, 2023). This is in agreement with the study of Ahulanya (2019) who carried out a study on assessment of challenges inhibiting the teaching of responsible citizenship in social studies classrooms in secondary schools in Abia state, which revealed that the unavailability of clear social studies objectives, lack of training for social studies teachers and lack of regular social studies teaching materials' inspection were challenges inhibiting the teaching of responsible citizenship in social studies classrooms in secondary schools. It equally agrees with Emereole (2018), who conducted a study on management ethical and moral dilemmas for quality work environment of public upper basic and middle basic education level schools in Imo State, which revealed that moral and ethics management programmes can enhance the quality of the work environment in public primary schools. The implication of these findings shows the need for management staff of higher education institutions (HEIs) to set clear school ethical and moral policies and ensure that those policies are strictly adhered to. When school ethical and moral policies are made, it helps to curb and reduce ethical and moral dilemmas. The statistical analysis of hypothesis one however revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of how ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies can assist in teaching responsible citizenship in urban and rural higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria.

As analysed on table 2, the findings of research question two reveal that the various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria include; setting clear ethical and moral standards for responsible citizenship, ensuring regular value orientation programmes, regular ethical and moral updates, provision of adequate materials for the effective teaching of responsible citizenship through the instrumentality of social studies conscious staff, regular ethical and moral trainings for management staff, and social studies lecturers, involving undergraduates in



setting ethical and moral standards in HEIs, and provision of institutional guidelines, and principles. This finding is in agreement with Ukaigwe and Mbonu (2017), who carried out a study on principal's role on teaching responsible citizenship through the instrumentality of social studies in secondary schools in the 21st century in Owerri North Local government area of Imo state, which revealed that existing ways of managing ethical and moral dilemmas in secondary schools include provision of adequate teaching equipment for social studies teaching and learning, training of newly employed social studies teachers, and introducing government-community participation in the promotion of responsible citizenship. It is also in agreement with Ahulanya (2019), who conducted a study on study on assessment of challenges inhibiting the teaching of responsible citizenship in social studies classrooms in secondary schools in Abia state, which revealed that the management programmes on responsible citizenship can enhance the quality of the work environment in public lower basic and middle basic education level schools. It is also in line with Arome, (2021), who carried out a study on responsible citizenship practices in public secondary schools in Ankpa, which revealed that there was little or moderate level responsible citizenship practices in most public schools in Benue state, thus there is need for greater awareness to be created on responsible citizenship and the management of ethical and moral dilemmas. It is also in consonance with Ushie, (2016), who carried out a study on management of educational facilities for responsible citizenship purpose in Cross River state, which revealed that maintenance of educational facilities, removal of damaged facilities and participation of stakeholders are so some ways managing issues of ethical and moral dilemmas in schools.

4. Summary of Findings

The findings revealed that the social studies lecturers display the teaching materials with diagrams, building upon existing ethics and morals in the society, maintains minimum standard within and around the HEI environment, brings about openness in management of values in undergraduates, promotes ethical and moral consciousness amongst staff and undergraduates, ensures management's commitment to continuously improve teaching and learning situations, leads to continuity of organizational processes, sets direct clear ethical and moral standards, and brings about continuous improvement in teaching responsible citizenship through social studies are the ways ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies can assist in teaching responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State. The various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria include: setting clear ethical and moral standards for responsible citizenship, ensuring regular value orientation programmes, regular ethical and moral updates, provision of adequate materials for the effective teaching of responsible

citizenship through the instrumentality of social studies conscious staff, regular ethical and moral trainings for management staff, and social studies lecturers, involving undergraduates in setting ethical and moral standards in HEIs, and provision of institutional guidelines, and principles. Therefore, according to the findings, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of how can ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies assist in teaching responsible citizenship in urban and rural higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria , and there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of various strategies for navigating ethical and moral dilemmas in social studies through the teaching of responsible citizenship in urban and rural higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria.

5. Conclusion

In line with the findings of this study, it is concluded that the teaching of responsible citizenship through the instrumentality of social studies can curb and reduce ethical and moral dilemmas among management staff, social studies lecturers, and undergraduates of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta State, Nigeria. The Nigerian people need awareness on the importance of responsible citizenship. Ethical and moral dilemmas are eminent were ethical and moral principles are not adequately outlined. The people can get confused with what is good an what is wrong/bad, hence the increase in ethical and moral dilemmas. But responsible citizenship helps in shaping the thoughts, reflective thinking abilities, and rationality of management staff, social studies lecturers, and undergraduates of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Delta state, Nigeria. This will help in promoting cordial, effective, and efficient relationship between the stakeholders for the achievement of organizational performance and educational aims, goals and objectives.

5.1 Recommendations

From the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- 1. Regular in-service training on school management should be arranged for management staff, Social Studies lecturers and students by the government through the schools' management in collaboration with the Delta State Ministry of Education, adequate 21st century ethical and moral values should be inculcated in all undergraduates in Delta state.*
- 2. The ministry of education should carefully consider ethical and moral principles of the school when setting general standards.*
- 3. Government should make and implement good ethical and moral polices at all levels of education.*
- 4. The ministry of education should incorporate school ethical and moral training into their social studies education curriculum just the way it is in other fields.*



5. Regular in-service trainings on management of ethical and moral dilemmas should be arranged for social studies teachers and other staff by the ministry of education, and higher education institutions (HEIs).

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Data Availability Statement

Data supporting this manuscript will be provided upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.

Declarations

The data generated and analysed in this study did not use any AI generative means nor assistance.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declares no conflict of interest.

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