



## Multicultural Education Contents, Attitudes, Practices, and Challenges in Nigeria's Social Studies Education

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### Abstract

Harnessing Nigeria's rich cultural diversity could hasten multi-dimensional development. This study endeavours to contribute to fostering peacebuilding and social cohesion within Nigeria's multi-ethnic landscape, grappling with numerous conflicts. Specifically, we investigate the teaching practices, attitudes, and obstacles encountered by social studies teachers in delivering Multicultural Education (MCE) contents. Employing an embedded qualitative and quantitative mixed methods approach, data were gathered through a closed-ended questionnaire, an open-ended questionnaire, and an observation checklist within the Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu state, Southeast Nigeria. Our research encapsulates responses from 267 students, insights from 31 educators, and observations conducted in 18 social studies classrooms across six schools. Our findings reveal a notable disparity: while educators exhibit a positive and high inclination toward multicultural attitudes, the implementation of multicultural practices remains considerably deficient. The low teachers' multicultural practices are echoed in the perspectives of both teachers and students and substantiated by direct observations conducted during this research. Moreover, deficiencies in MCE practices are due to teacher scepticism, limited knowledge of diversity issues in education, and a dearth of adequate learning resources. Policy reforms and actionable changes in MCE practices are required to address prevalent disparities and improve the efficacy of MCE in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Cultural diversity, Multicultural attitudes, Multicultural education, Nigeria, Social studies, Teaching practices

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## **Introduction**

Multicultural Education (MCE), as elucidated by Banks (2014), emphasizes the significance of appreciating, valuing, and respecting students' diverse cultural and ideological backgrounds within their communities. This educational framework is similar to the elements of the funds of knowledge theory by González et al. (2006) underscoring the notion that all students deserve an education acknowledging and embracing their lived experiences and multifaceted identities, encompassing political, religious, ethnic, cultural, and gender diversities. Central to MCE is the regular integration of diverse perspectives and experiences into the curriculum, alongside the implementation of culturally responsive teaching strategies within classroom settings, as advocated by Sleeter (2001). This multifaceted approach not only nurtures students' multicultural awareness, knowledge, and competency but also acknowledges the potential of their cultural heritage as a valuable resource influencing their learning experiences (Gay, 2000).

In addition, Banks (2014) posits that MCE plays a pivotal role in dispelling stereotypes, mitigating unchecked misunderstandings, and fostering understanding, appreciation, and respect for cultural diversity among students within their school and broader community environments. Sleeter (1996) further underscores the importance of MCE goals by emphasizing the acquisition of skills and knowledge for engaging with diverse cultural perspectives. Similarly, prior studies by Ladson-Billings (2022) and Gay (2000) underscore the empowering potential of MCE, in facilitating societal inclusivity and equity. Additionally, Sleeter (2001) highlights the significance of a curriculum that respects and incorporates learners' diverse cultural heritages. Notably, Parkhouse and Bennett (2023) emphasize the beneficial impact of culturally responsive teaching, particularly for students from marginalized communities.

Compelling evidence highlighting diverse approaches and benefits of MCE in various settings is available. For instance, Durden et al. (2015) conducted a study in the Midwestern United States exploring culturally relevant pedagogy in preschool classrooms. They observed teachers actively engaging cultural agents from the community to educate children about different cultures and languages. Utilizing resources such as books, puzzles, family pictures, and children's artwork, educators curated a diverse physical environment encompassing language, ethnicity, and gender diversities. Similarly, Sturdivant and Alanis (2019) documented a teacher's intentional design of curriculum lessons that involved families, thereby integrating culturally representative components tailored to students' interests. This deliberate practice significantly fostered inclusivity within the classroom environment. Moreover, other studies by Sleeter (2001) and Gay (2000) emphasize that students engaged in MCE initiatives feel a sense of inclusion in the curriculum. This inclusive approach enhances their learning experience and cultivates a sense of safety, support, and value, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds.

The foregoing benefits of MCE are cogent reasons for centering teachers' multicultural practices and attitudes in teacher development programmes. Hence, the necessity of investigating the ongoing implementation of MCE by teachers stands as imperative, particularly within multicultural landscapes such as Nigeria, the focal point of this study. Nigeria, home to a population exceeding 200 million people, encompasses a rich tapestry of over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 languages, epitomizing Nigeria's cultural diversity. Predominantly, the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo ethnic groups occupy the northern, southwestern, and southeastern regions, respectively. Furthermore, the country hosts significant religious affiliations, primarily Christianity and Islam, alongside a minority practicing traditional African religions. Islam holds prominence in the North, while Christianity prevails in the South, encompassing diverse cultural and religious expressions across the nation.

This rich mosaic of diversity in Nigeria emphasizes the compelling necessity for effective MCE implementation, achievable by teachers holding positive multicultural attitudes and practices. Following González et al. (2006) funds of knowledge theory, the potential of MCE lies in teachers' capacity to harness Nigeria's cultural richness from students' diverse lived experiences in their local communities, which could propel development across various realms, including the economy, education, and socio-political domains. For instance, research by Amalu et al. (2020) underscores the profound impact of cultural diversity on tourism development, triggering amplified family income, heightened government revenue, increased employment opportunities, infrastructural advancements, and improved access to basic amenities. Additionally, as highlighted by Nzeadibe et al. (2015), MCE fosters a sense of cultural sensitivity within development initiatives, consequently reducing conflicts and indirectly bolstering the three pillars of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental.

Nigeria grapples with multiple challenges, including ethnic power struggles, religious intolerance, poverty, corruption, and economic inequality, as highlighted by Akunne et al. (2018), Obiagu et al. (2020), and Salawu (2010). These factors underpin the widespread and entrenched ethno-religious conflicts prevalent in the country. Odey and Ugar (2023) recently showed the persistently unaddressed roots of violent conflicts in Nigeria, notably within educational contexts, portraying a concerning lack of visible solutions. Also, Moland's (2015) research focusing on a non-formal radio-based MCE program revealed a tendency to avoid addressing structural issues such as ethnic and religious complexities within MCE. Concerns arose over equitable representation of diverse groups and ensuring authentic portrayals of diversity, limiting the program's effectiveness in addressing pertinent societal conflicts.

Recognizing MCE as a pivotal strategy for mitigating conflict arising from intolerance and stereotypes, our study's focus lies on the imperative role of educators implementing MCE. The positive attitude of educators toward MCE practices, profound understanding of its essence, familiarity with effective practices, and adeptness in navigating implementation challenges are essential. Consequently, our research in Nigeria aims to examine these critical aspects, striving to enhance MCE practices and their potential to address societal challenges. While the social studies curriculum in Nigeria incorporates MCE content, prevalent societal issues such as ethnic and religious intolerance persist, indicating inadequacies in practical MCE implementation. For instance, Obiagu et al. (2020) revealed in their quasi-experimental study on peace education in social studies that, despite exposure to peace-oriented content, students retained troubling perceptions about violent behaviours by ethnic others, undermining efforts to discourage social conflicts and enhance social cohesion. Furthermore, incidents of school bullying, oppression, assault, victimization, ethnic and religious misrepresentations, and discrimination persist, resulting in severe consequences such as physical harm, sexual molestation, and fatalities which are rife (Preti, 2008; Obiagu et al., 2020; Okagbue et al., 2022).

Despite the growing issues suggesting ineffective MCE, research assessing the attitudes, practices, and challenges faced by social studies teachers in implementing MCE content remains scarce in Nigeria and similar developing country contexts. Therefore, this study aims to address the overarching questions: What are the teaching practices and attitudes of social studies teachers concerning MCE content? What challenges do they encounter in implementing MCE content within the social studies curriculum? The primary objective of this study is to explore and analyse these critical aspects. While our study focuses on a local context in Nigeria, its findings hold the potential to contribute significantly to similar multicultural settings, particularly within Africa. Moreover, these findings can spark meaningful dialogues aimed at enhancing MCE and fostering increased cultural tolerance, understanding, and respect within an increasingly globalised world.

### Context of this study: MCE in Nigeria

Nigeria’s social studies curricula, from the 2007 revision to the latest 2018 edition, incorporate MCE content encompassing diverse topics such as culture, social values, marriage traditions, and social conflicts. These MCE-related themes are integral components of the basic education level covering Primary 1 to 6 and Junior Secondary School (JSS) 1 to 3 (i.e., Grades 1 to 9). In this study, our focus centres on the MCE contents within the Social Studies curriculum. We categorize these MCE-related topics into two segments: direct and indirect/hidden content. Table I delineates the direct MCE contents prevalent in the Primary 1 to JSS 3 Social Studies curriculum, while Table 2 highlights the indirect or concealed MCE components emphasized.

**Table 1.** *Direct MCE Contents in Nigerian Social Studies Curriculum*

Class	Topic	Contents	Methods & materials
Primary 1	Meaning and types of culture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meaning of culture - Peoples’ way of life that include dressing, dancing, eating.</li> <li>2. Types of culture – Material and non-material culture.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pictures of people wearing traditional dresses.</li> <li>2. Pictures showing material and non-material culture.</li> </ol>
	Foods we eat in our culture as family members.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Some Nigerian foods are Yam, Eba, Amala, Tuwo Shinkafa, plantain, Rice, Beans Cocoyam, pounded yam, Akpu, Starch, etc.</li> <li>2. Consequences of eating together as a family e.g. promotes communalism, happiness, family unity and loyalty, etc.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pupils’ text and workbooks.</li> <li>2. Picture showing the different types of food in our culture.</li> <li>3. Picture of happy moods of people eating together in the family.</li> </ol>
Primary 2	Greetings and respect to elders in our culture.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Greeting is a way of showing respect to people and appreciating them.</li> <li>2. Forms of greeting include kneeling, prostrating, shaking of hands, clenching of fists, etc.</li> <li>3. Greeting promotes tolerance, good neighbourliness, courtesy, friendliness, etc.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pictures of different ways of greeting.</li> <li>2. Video clips.</li> </ol>
	Types of marriages in our community.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meaning of marriage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lawful and acceptable union of a man and woman to make up a family.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Types of marriages: polygamy, monogamy etc.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pictures of husbands and wives. (Couples).</li> <li>2. Pictures or photographs that show types of marriages.</li> </ol>
Primary 3	Various ways of getting married and the objects used in the ceremony.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Marriage practices in Nigeria e.g. agreement by the two families by paying the bride price. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious marriage either in the court or mosque.</li> <li>• Traditional marriage or court wedding.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Objects used in marriage ceremonies: Wine, kolanut, food items, wedding gown, money, services, etc.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bible and Qur’an.</li> <li>2. Picture of church, mosque and shrine.</li> <li>3. Audio visual aid.</li> <li>4. Textbooks, resource persons, marriage objects.</li> <li>5. Real objects.</li> <li>6. Marriage album.</li> </ol>

	Culture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meaning of culture – way of life of a people.</li> <li>2. Elements of culture – languages, foods, clothes, religions, festivals and ceremonies.</li> <li>3. Why different people have different customs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Differences in histories</li> <li>● Differences in geographical position</li> <li>● Differences in external influences</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pictures of dressing from different cultural areas.</li> <li>2. Pictures showing different ways of greetings, eating etc,</li> <li>3. Real cultural materials and objects.</li> </ol>
Primary 4	Other people's beliefs and traditions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ways our beliefs and tradition differ from and similar to others. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The names they call God</li> <li>● The methods of worship</li> <li>● The style of dressing, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Some of the values that can be promoted with better understanding of cultural differences include respect of other people's views, beliefs and traditions; fairness; unity; good neighbourliness etc.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Real copies of Bible, Qur'an, Candle, dresses associated with different religious groups, etc.</li> <li>2. Pictures of people with different cultural backgrounds and beliefs in an interaction.</li> </ol>
Primary 5	Unity in cultural diversity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meaning of culture, diversity and unity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Culture as a people's way of life</li> <li>● Unity refers to oneness.</li> <li>● Diversity refers to differences.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Unity in cultural diversity refers to oneness in spite of differences.</li> <li>3. Ways of promoting unity in cultural diversity in our community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Making friends with mates who are not from our ethnic group.</li> <li>● Eating foods from other people's culture.</li> <li>● Wearing dresses from other culture.</li> <li>● Learning to speak languages of other ethnic groups.</li> <li>● Being truthful in your interaction with people etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Relevant pictures and charts.</li> <li>2. Relevant pictures and charts.</li> </ol>
JSS 1	Meaning and characteristics of culture.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meaning off culture- a total way of the life of the people.</li> <li>2. Components of culture – material and non-material culture.</li> <li>3. Features of culture – language, food and dressing, religion, technology/craft, etc.</li> <li>4. Characteristics of culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We learn culture.</li> <li>● It tells us how different activities can be carried out.</li> <li>● It allows a range of permissible behaviours, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Cultural differences.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Motion pictures of culture.</li> <li>2. Pictures of cultural display.</li> <li>3. Visits to museum.</li> <li>4. Regalia.</li> </ol>

Similarities and differences among cultures in Nigeria.	1.	Cultural similarities in Nigeria.	1.	Motion pictures of culture
	2.	Cultural differences in Nigeria.	2.	Pictures of cultural display
	3.	Shared norms and values of Nigerian communities.	3.	Regalia

Source: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) 2012, 2018.

**Table 2.** *Indirect MCE Contents in Nigerian Social Studies Curriculum*

Class	Topic	Contents	Methods & materials
Primary 1	Values that show good morals in our society	Examples of morals to show what is right i.e. greeting, respect, loyalty, kindness, honesty, contentment, tolerance, etc and what is wrong e.g. stealing, bullying, fighting, lying etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cartoons</li> <li>● Posters</li> <li>● ROM film and video clips.</li> <li>● Regalia</li> <li>● Photographs.</li> <li>● Exhibits, etc.</li> </ul>
JSS I	Positive group behaviours.	1. Types of positive group behaviours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mass action.</li> <li>● Communal labour.</li> <li>● Joining a protest or march.</li> <li>● Participating in a fight.</li> <li>● Acting patriotically.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Simulation games.</li> <li>● Resource persons.</li> <li>● Pictograms.</li> </ul>
JSS 3	1. Promoting peaceful living in our society.	1. Meaning of peace. 2. Types of peace – positive and negative peace. 3. Importance of peace. 4. Ways of promoting peace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Guided questions.</li> <li>● Debates,</li> <li>● Resource person (Senior Police Officer).</li> <li>● Role play.</li> <li>● Guided class discussion.</li> <li>● Art works.</li> <li>● Films and videos.</li> </ul>
Most hidden multicultural contents (values) are emphasized in civic education curriculum. These values include cooperation, honesty, tolerance, integrity, etc. Only few are found in Social Studies curriculum.	2. Social conflicts.	1. Meaning of conflict. 2. Types of conflict. 3. Examples of conflict – inter-ethnic conflict, communal/intra-ethnic conflict. 4. Causes of conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dramatization.</li> <li>● Discussion.</li> <li>● Simulation.</li> <li>● Radio &amp; Tv.</li> <li>● Documentaries of conflict situations.</li> <li>● Pictures.</li> </ul>
	3. Managing and resolving conflicts.	1. Conflict management and resolution e.g. dialogue, compromise, arbitration, mediating, litigation. 2. Attributes required of conflict resolution e.g. mutual understanding,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demonstrations.</li> <li>● Field trip to Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre (ADR).</li> </ul>

respect for rule of law, tolerance, self-control, respect for opposing views.

*Source:* Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) 2012, 2018.

## Methods

This descriptive research employed an embedded qualitative and quantitative mixed methods approach, utilising various instruments including a closed-ended questionnaire, an open-ended questionnaire, and an observation schedule to gather data on teachers' multicultural attitudes, practices, understanding, and challenges. The study was conducted within Nsukka Local Government Area (LGA) in Enugu State, southeast Nigeria. The study population encompassed teachers and students from the middle (Primary 4-6) and upper (Junior Secondary 1-3) levels of basic education institutions situated in Nsukka. The upper basic education tier in Nsukka LGA comprised 6,959 students and 47 social studies teachers, summing up to a total of 7,006 individuals across 28 secondary schools. Although specific figures for middle and upper schools were unavailable, all primary school teachers were considered social studies instructors owing to the structural placement within the primary school teaching framework in Nigeria.

Drawing upon the assumption that schools with larger student populations would typically employ a higher number of teachers, our study utilized a convenience sampling approach to select six schools boasting the highest student enrolments. Within these schools, a random sampling technique was employed to select participants for the study. The study sample comprised 267 students drawn from the selected schools, including three junior secondary schools and three senior primary schools, with 45 students from each school. The students' ages ranged from 8 to 17 years, with a mean age of 11.74 years. Furthermore, the study involved the purposive sampling technique to encompass all social studies teachers within the sampled school classes. A total of 31 social studies teachers participated in the study, comprising 17 teachers from primary schools and 14 from secondary schools. Comprehensive participant profiles are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *Study Participants Profile*

Category		Teachers		Students	
		F	%	F	%
<i>Gender</i>	Male	12	38.7	100	37.5
	Female	19	61.3	167	62.5
<i>Class</i>	Primary 4	9	29.0	47	17.6
	Primary 5	3	9.7	89	33.3
	Primary 6	5	16.1	-	-
	Junior Secondary 1	4	12.9	44	16.5
	Junior Secondary 2	7	22.6	59	22.1
<i>Age</i>	Junior Secondary 3	3	9.7	28	10.5
	21 – 30 years	10	32.3		
	31 – 40 years	15	48.4		
	41 – 50 years	4	12.9		
<i>Educational Qualification</i>	51 years and above	2	6.5		
	Social Studies Education (SSE)	15	48.4		
	Other SSE Courses	8	25.8		
	Non-SSE Courses	7	22.6		
	Non-Education Course	1	3.2		
	1 – 5 years	14	45.2		

<i>Years of Experience</i>	6 – 10 years	11	35.5
	11 – 15 years	3	9.7
	16 – 25 years	1	3.2
	26 years and above	2	6.5

Note. F = Frequency | % = Percentage

### Instruments for Data Collection

Our research employed three distinct instruments for data collection: the Teachers' Multicultural Education Questionnaire (TMEQ), the Students' Multicultural Education Questionnaire (SMEQ), and the Multicultural Education Practice Observation Checklist (MEPOC), all designed and developed by the researchers. The TMEQ comprised both structured and open-ended items, utilizing a 4-point rating scale encompassing Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). This questionnaire comprised two sections: Section A focused on gathering respondents' biodata, while Section B aimed to elicit information regarding teachers' attitudes, practices, and challenges encountered in implementing MCE content within the social studies curriculum of the Nsukka Local Government Area.

Section B of the TMEQ was organized into three distinct clusters corresponding to teachers' attitudes, practices, and encountered challenges in MCE. Cluster 1, adapted from Ponterroito, Baluch, Greig, and Rivera (1998), comprised 19 items and focused on gauging teachers' multicultural attitudes. Cluster 2, consisting of 14 items, aimed to assess social studies teachers' practices regarding MCE. To complement the data collected from Cluster 2 of the TMEQ, students' responses from the SMEQ were utilized. The SMEQ, structured into two sections, featured Section A collecting respondents' biodata. Section B of the SMEQ comprised a single cluster of 14 dichotomous (Yes/No) items, with items same as in Cluster 2 of the TMEQ, capturing students' perceptions of their teachers' multicultural practices. A dichotomously scored instrument was preferred for students' ease of response.

Additionally, Cluster 3 of the TMEQ encompassed three open-ended questions, facilitating direct input from field practitioners (i.e., teachers) regarding challenges encountered in implementing MCE content or practicing its principles. The choice of employing an open-ended questionnaire over an interview schedule stemmed from previous difficulties the researchers encountered in soliciting teacher participation in interviews. Furthermore, the MEPOC, comprised of ten dichotomous (Yes/No) items assessing multicultural presence within classrooms, was utilized alongside the classrooms' MCE practice observation schedule. The observation schedules were completed by the second and third authors.

The validation of these instruments involved a rigorous process, commencing with face validation by three distinguished research experts. Among these experts, one specialized in Measurement & Evaluation, while the other two were esteemed social science Education professionals from the Faculty of Education at the University of Nigeria. Recommendations provided by these experts led to revisions in the questionnaires, primarily focusing on enhancing item relevance and linguistic clarity. Pre-research trials were conducted to test the instruments' efficacy, where the students' questionnaire underwent trial testing with 20 junior social studies students. Simultaneously, the teachers' questionnaire underwent trial testing with ten teachers from a school situated outside the selected schools within Nsukka LGA, ensuring their non-participation in the study area. Subsequently, responses gathered from these trial tests were collated and subjected to analysis using Cronbach's Alpha to determine the instruments' internal consistency reliability.

The reliability coefficients obtained for the teacher's instrument demonstrated values of 0.64, 0.78, and 0.85 for Cluster 1, Cluster 2, and the overall instrument, respectively. Similarly, the reliability coefficient for the students' questionnaire was determined as 0.63. These coefficients, indicative of good internal consistency, were deemed acceptable for inclusion in the study based on established criteria (Field, 2013). Furthermore, ethical approval for the study was duly obtained from the ethics and project committee of the Department of Social Science Education at the University of Nigeria, ensuring adherence to ethical standards throughout the research process.

The fieldwork was conducted by the second and third authors, initiating the process by securing formal consent from the school administrators and participants within the selected six schools. Subsequently, the administration of questionnaires to social studies students and teachers took place. Notably, 267 students completed the questionnaires on-site, ensuring a comprehensive 100% return rate as the researchers successfully retrieved all completed measures. In contrast, while 39 teachers' questionnaires were distributed, only 31 completed measures were retrieved, accounting for a response rate of 79.49%. This slight discrepancy in response rates was observed among the teacher participants. Additionally, the observational component of the study encompassed a total of 18 classes: nine classes in primary schools and nine in junior secondary schools, meticulously observed by the second and third researchers.

The data collected through the Teachers' Multicultural Education Questionnaire (TMEQ) underwent analysis utilizing mean and standard deviation calculations. Employing a 4-item Likert scale, we established a criterion of 2.50 as the cut-off point for item acceptance, indicating the mean weight of each item on the scale. Consequently, any item scoring 2.50 or above signified agreement and positive multicultural attitudes or high multicultural practices, while items with a mean score below 2.50 indicated disagreement or negative multicultural attitudes or low cultural practices. For the analysis of dichotomous data obtained from the students' questionnaire and the observation schedule, a straightforward percentage analysis method was employed. Establishing a benchmark for acceptance at 60%, items scoring 60% and above indicated commendable or high levels of multicultural practices, whereas items falling below 60% suggested inadequate multicultural practices. Furthermore, to evaluate group differences in mean multicultural attitudes and practices among teacher variables, statistical techniques such as *t*-tests and ANOVA were utilized for comparative analysis.

## Findings

The findings of the study are reported below under three headings each representing each studied variable: multicultural attitudes, multicultural practices and MCE challenges. Important to note is that asterisked items are worded to indicate negative multicultural attitude or practice and hence reversed scored to get the true picture of the overall reported attitude or practice.

### Teachers' Multicultural Attitude

The collective mean score for teachers' multicultural attitudes registers at 3.01, with a standard deviation of .25 (Table 4). This mean score surpasses the established cut-off point of 2.50, indicating a prevalent high and positive disposition among teachers towards multiculturalism. Notably, teachers exhibited positive inclinations concerning their responsibility to cultivate multicultural awareness among students and to encourage an appreciation for cultural diversity. Across most items, teachers scored above the mean benchmark, except for items 5, 11, 15, and 17. These items reveal reservations among teachers. They expressed concerns, believing that educating students about cultural diversity might instigate conflicts within the classroom or society. Additionally, some teachers conveyed a lack

of necessity for multicultural training and expressed the opinion that fostering pride in one’s culture does not fall under their purview as educators.

**Table 4.** *Responses to Teachers’ Multicultural Attitudes*

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I am aware of the diversity of cultural backgrounds in my classroom	3.58	.56
2	I find teaching a culturally diverse student group rewarding	3.19	.90
3	Teaching methods need to be adapted to meet the needs of a culturally diverse student group	3.54	.72
4	Teachers have the responsibility to be aware of their students’ cultural backgrounds	3.41	.71
5	It is not the teacher’s responsibility to encourage pride in one’s culture*	2.41(2.58)	1.14
6	I believe that the teacher’s role needs to be redefined to address the needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds	3.19	.87
7	When dealing with bilingual children, communication styles often are interpreted as behavioural problems	2.90	.87
8	As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher’s job becomes increasingly rewarding	3.03	.94
9	I can learn a great deal from students with culturally different backgrounds	3.70	.46
10	As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher’s job becomes increasingly challenging	3.12	1.02
11	Multicultural training for teachers is not necessary*	2.29(2.70)	1.10
12	To be an effective teacher, one needs to be aware of cultural differences present in the classroom	3.32	.90
13	Students should learn in English only*	3.09(1.90)	.94
14	Students should be prohibited from communicating in any other language in school apart from English*	2.70(2.29)	1.13
15	Today’s curriculum gives undue importance to multiculturalism and diversity*	1.87(3.12)	.95
16	Regardless of the makeup of my class, it is important for students to be aware of multicultural diversity	3.32	.74
17	Teaching students about cultural diversity will only create conflict in the classroom or the society*	2.41(2.58)	1.11
18	Being multiculturally aware is not relevant for social studies*	2.54(2.43)	1.12
19	I believe it is the teacher’s role to teach students to appreciate other students’ culture	3.51	.85
	<b>Multicultural Attitude of Teachers</b>	<b>3.01</b>	<b>.25</b>

*Note:* \* = used to show reversed scored items that indicate poor attitude. Mean scores in brackets represent scores of the items when unreversed. N=31

The mean scores of categorized responses are presented in Table 5. Statistical analyses, including *t*-tests and one-way ANOVA, were conducted on the data considering different groups across studied categories (gender, years of teaching experience, class, and educational qualification of teachers). The outcomes revealed that there were no statistically significant differences observed in the mean scores of multicultural attitudes across these studied categories. However, the mean scores of male teachers were marginally higher compared to female teachers in terms of multicultural attitudes. Likewise, teachers with over 10 years of teaching experience exhibited higher mean scores in multicultural attitudes. Moreover, primary school teachers demonstrated comparatively higher levels of multicultural attitudes than their secondary school counterparts. Furthermore, an interesting

observation unfolded concerning age groups, as older teachers (aged 41 and above) showcased higher levels of multicultural attitudes in contrast to younger teachers (aged 21 to 40 years) (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Mean Scores Based on the Study's Variables

Variables	Gender		Teaching experience (in years)						Educational qualification				Teacher's age (in years)				Teacher's class	
	Male	Female	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-25	26+	SOS	SSE	EDU	Non-EDU	21-30	31-40	41-50	51+	Middle basic (Primary 4,5,6)	Upper basic (JSS 1,2,3)	
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
Multicultural attitude	3.08 (.23)	2.96 (.25)	2.99 (.27)	2.95 (.22)	3.12 (.19)	2.64	3.23 (.40)	3.01 (.29)	2.95 (.23)	3.05 (.18)	3.21	2.96 (.32)	2.97 (.18)	3.14 (.13)	3.23 (.41)	3.07 (.22)	2.93 (.26)	
Multicultural practice	2.33 (.39)	2.31 (.18)	2.24 (.32)	2.38 (.23)	2.29 (.26)	3.21	2.42 (.10)	2.42 (.24)	2.12 (.34)	2.33 (.16)	2.28	2.21 (.36)	2.32 (.13)	2.54 (.41)	2.42 (.10)	2.28 (.29)	2.37 (.25)	
<i>n</i>	12	19	14	11	3	1	2	15	8	7	1	10	15	4	2	17	14	

### Social Studies Teachers' Multicultural Practices

Students' and teachers' responses gleaned from their respective closed-ended questionnaires, coupled with the outcomes obtained through the researchers' observations of classroom dynamics, collectively constituted the basis for assessing social studies teachers' multicultural practices. Responses and observation results are subsequently presented. About 53 % of responding students agreed that their teachers engaged in multicultural practices, closely aligning with teachers' mean reported rating of these practices (Mean = 2.32; i.e., 57 %).

#### *Social studies teachers' reports on their multicultural practices*

The results depicted in Table 6 present an overview of teachers' multicultural practices. The grand mean for teachers' multicultural practice was calculated as 2.32 with a standard deviation of .27, falling below the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicates that, overall, social studies teachers' engagement in multicultural practices is rated as low. Remarkably, teachers reported several tendencies that contribute to this low rating including a lack of consideration for students' diversity during instructional planning, minimal awareness of the potential impact of classroom statements on students' cultural identity and pride, and desire to discourage of mother-tongue's influence in students' English usage. Furthermore, teachers mentioned avoiding discussions around stereotypes to prevent potential conflicts in the classroom. Regarding teaching practices, excursion visits to cultural museums, the organization of cultural days, or the invitation of resource persons for MCE classes were noticeably absent and not implemented. Regarding positive practices, some teachers reported commendable efforts such as assigning social studies tasks that encourage students to share diverse cultural experiences and backgrounds. Additionally, they acknowledged avoiding restricting students to particular greeting styles or language use, allowing for cultural diversity expression.

**Table 6.** *Responses of Teachers' Multicultural Practices*

SN	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I wear a cultural attire on the days I teach culture topics	3.03	.87
2	I highlight and challenge stereotypes when I teach about people, culture and identity	2.22	.80
3	I expect or demand students to greet me in my cultural style irrespective of whether we share the same cultural background or not*	2.61(2.38)	1.05
4	I discourage mother-tongue interference in my students' use of English*	2.25(2.74)	1.06
5	I allow students to greet me in their cultural style	2.54	.96
6	I motivate my students to challenge stereotypes against their socio-cultural group and against any other group	1.96	.75
7	I do not discuss stereotypes in my class to avoid conflicts and tensions in my class*	2.03(2.96)	.87
8	I consider my students' diversity when planning classroom lessons	2.12	.71
9	I consider the impact my statements can have on my students' cultural identity and pride	2.09	.78
10	I encourage students to speak their native languages in school	2.61	.98
11	We organize cultural day for students and encourage students to wear their traditional attire to the event	2.12	.80

12	I give students assignments or class activities that allow them to share their diverse cultural experiences and backgrounds	3.12	.80
13	I invite parents from other cultural backgrounds to share cultural stories and histories in our classes on culture	1.90	.70
14	I take students to cultural museums and exhibition centres to see cultural artefacts and displays	1.87	.67
<b>Multicultural Practice of Teachers</b>		<b>2.32</b>	<b>.27</b>

Note: \* = used to show reversed scored items that indicate poor attitude. Mean scores in brackets represent scores of the items when unreversed. n=31

The t-test and one-way ANOVA analyses conducted across various groups (gender, years of teaching experience, class, and educational qualifications of teachers) showed no statistically significant difference in their mean scores for multicultural practice. However, from the results shown in Table 5, male teachers displayed higher mean scores compared to female teachers in both classroom multicultural practice, and those with over 10 years of teaching experience also exhibited higher scores. Secondary school teachers demonstrated higher multicultural practice compared to primary school teachers. Additionally, older teachers (41 and above) displayed higher multicultural practice than younger teachers (aged 21 to 40 years).

***Students’ reports on their social studies teachers’ multicultural practices***

To increase the reliability and validity of our findings while checkmating teachers’ response bias, we surveyed 267 students whose teachers participated in the study. A total of 53.1% of student respondents acknowledged that their social studies teachers implement multicultural practices (Table 7). Conversely, 47.6% of students who negated the teachers’ multicultural practices responded that their teachers do not implement these practices. This student-reported data aligns with the feedback provided by social studies teachers about their MCE practices. A closer examination of individual items indicates that social studies teachers typically do not wear traditional attire when teaching cultural topics; students feel less encouraged by their teachers to challenge stereotypes; teachers allow students to greet them using their cultural styles; social studies classes mainly encourage English communication, discouraging native languages or dialects; students are given assignments that permit them to share diverse cultural experiences. However, activities like excursions to cultural museums, holding cultural days, and inviting resource persons during multicultural classes are infrequent.

**Table 7.** *Students’ Responses on Teachers’ MCE Practices*

S/N	Items	Students (n=267)			
		Yes		No	
	As a student, respond to the following statements related to how teachers practice multicultural education contents.	Frequenc y (F)	Percenta ge (%)	Frequenc y (F)	Percenta ge (%)
1	My social studies teacher wears a cultural attire on the days he or she teaches us culture topics	79	29.6	188	70.4
2	My social studies teacher tells us to be proud of our heritage and culture in school and outside the school.	152	56.9	115	43.1
3	My social studies teacher tells us to question bad things said about people from other communities or ethnic groups	100	37.5	167	62.5
4	My social studies teacher allows us to greet him or her in our own cultural style	188	70.4	79	29.6

5	My social studies teacher encourages us to speak our native languages or dialect	104	39.0	163	61.0
6	My social studies teacher teaches us to like people for who they are	210	78.7	57	21.3
7	My social studies teacher teaches us not to discriminate against people whose culture or identity is different from ours	173	64.8	94	35.2
8	My social studies teacher teaches us to value and respect people despite cultural differences	237	88.8	30	11.2
9	We are allowed to speak only English in social studies classes	182	68.2	85	31.8
10	My social studies teacher uses examples and pictures to show us different cultural ideas	169	63.3	98	36.7
11	We are given social studies assignments or class activities that allow us to tell stories of our diverse cultural experiences and backgrounds	179	67.0	88	33.0
12	My teacher invites parents from other cultural backgrounds to share cultural stories and histories with us	70	26.2	197	73.8
13	My social studies teacher takes us to cultural museums and exhibition centres to see cultural artefacts and displays	66	24.7	201	75.3
14	My social studies teacher organizes cultural day for us and asks us to wear our cultural attire on that day.	76	28.5	191	71.5
	Total Multicultural Practice	141	53.1	126	47.6

### ***The observation results on classrooms' multicultural practices***

The observation outcomes of teachers' multicultural practices in 18 sampled classes across six schools are presented in Table 8. The findings point to a low level of classroom multicultural practice, with a percentage of 20.00%. This observation corroborates the assertions made by both teachers and students regarding the generally low levels of multicultural practice among social studies teachers. Only 2 out of the 18 observed classes displayed geographical maps, specifically Nigerian maps, on their walls; none of the classrooms, either in primary or secondary levels, exhibited photo charts depicting cultural exhibitions. However, certain multicultural practices were observed, such as teachers wearing native attire, allowing students to express their opinions in class, and permitting the use of native languages by students during lessons.

**Table 8.** *Researcher-observed MCE Practices in 18 Classes*

S/N	Items	Researchers (n=2)			
		Yes		No	
		F	%	F	%
	Researchers' observation schedule in 18 classes				
1	Nigeria cultural photos are hung on the class walls	0	0.0	18	100.00
2	Students speak their native languages in class	15	83.3	3	16.7
3	Teachers allow students to share their views in class	10	55.6	8	44.4
4	Teachers wear traditional attire	9	50.0	9	50.0

5	Photos of cultural exhibitions attended by the school are hung on class walls	0	0.0	18	100.00
6	Global cultural photos are displayed on the wall	0	0.0	18	100.00
7	Charts displaying cultures and states of students' population of a classroom are hung on the wall of the classroom	0	0.0	18	100.00
8	Charts displaying various Nigerian languages are hung on class wall	0	0.0	18	100.00
9	World or African or Nigerian map(s) hangs on class wall	2	11.1	16	88.8
10	Photos of different landscapes in different countries hang on the class wall	0	0.0	18	100.00
	Total	3.6	20.0	14.4	79.99

### **Teachers' MCE Understanding and Challenges**

The MCE perspectives and challenges of teachers were assessed with their responses to three open-ended questions that formed cluster three of the teachers' questionnaire on their multicultural practice (TMEO). The choice of an open-ended questionnaire was due to the researchers' experience of teachers' reluctance and refusal to grant interviews in previous studies. The three open-ended questions are (1) please explain what multicultural education entails to you in the provided space; (2) Please list your challenges with implementing multicultural curriculum contents in the space provided; (3) Please list your challenges with implementing multicultural principles in the space provided. 27 out of the 31 teachers who participated completed the open-ended questionnaire. Their responses or perspectives are presented below under three themes.

#### ***Social studies teachers' understanding of MCE***

Findings show that social studies teachers' knowledge of what MCE entails is limited. Their understanding of MCE is mostly limited to awareness of one's and others' cultures and excludes other diversity questions such as ethnic, racial, and gender diversities. For example, T6 explained that 'multicultural education means educating one to understand other people's culture, respect others and accept one another for the betterment of the society'. More examples are presented below.

Multicultural education entails helping the pupil to know more about their culture; it helps the pupils to participate in their culture; it also helps them to have the knowledge of other people's culture e.g. food, language, dressing, marriage, festivals etc. T5

Multicultural Education refers to any form of education that incorporates the histories, texts, values, beliefs and perspectives of people from different cultural background. T4

Multicultural Education is simply several culture in a particular environment. E.g., School, church and programme. When people from different culture come together, it brings harmony and can as well bring conflict. T17

Multicultural Education is an act or study of other culture from different ethnic groups we have in the country and history of Nigerian. T27

The overemphasis on culture excludes other diversity issues. Only one teacher considered the question of gender as a component of multicultural education, though T4's view if broaden can accommodate quality and diversity issues. T10 explained that 'multicultural education is a movement that gives equal opportunities to students of different cultures, different genders to learn.'

***Social studies teachers reported challenges with teaching MCE contents***

Several challenges with implementing multicultural content were listed by social studies teachers. Detailed answers were not provided here but bulleted points. These challenges include cultural erosion, poor financing, ethnic conflicts, ethnicity, cultural intolerance, pride, lateness to school, overage of some students, language barrier, time demand, and teacher incompetence.

***Social studies teachers' reported challenges with practising MCE***

Responses to this question were bulleted as well. Social studies teachers reported their challenges to practising MCE as including students' refusal to be disciplined; language barriers; conflict in opinions arising from cultural differences; leads to students' disrespect for elderly people; and lack of listening ear on the part of the teacher. About three teachers think that practising MCE (e.g., tolerating your students' dialect and cultural diversity, allowing students to voice dissatisfaction with discriminatory school practices, and tolerating students' dissenting voices) could bring disrespect to elders. Teacher 22 stated, "It brings insult to the teachers; it is boring to accommodate students of different cultural backgrounds, and it is too difficult to implement."

**Discussion**

The study's findings reveal a notable disparity between the positive and high multicultural attitudes among teachers and their actual low implementation of multicultural practices. Both teachers and students reported these low levels of multicultural practice, which were also observed by the researchers. Students' responses on their teachers' multicultural practices are slightly lower than teachers' self-rating of their practices, indicating high reliability of our results. Moreover, the study highlights that social studies teachers have a limited understanding of the concept of MCE. Additionally, challenges such as cultural conflicts, language barriers, and ethnic disputes were identified as obstacles to effectively practising MCE in classrooms.

Teachers exhibit positive attitudes toward integrating MCE into the curriculum, recognizing the importance of such an approach. Our findings align with research by Karacabey et al. (2019) that also identified positive MCE attitudes among Turkish teachers. This positive disposition among Nigerian social studies teachers may be influenced by the country's multicultural structure and the emphasis on teacher training and professional development, as indicated by Salako and Ojebiyi (2019). Their involvement in numerous MCE conferences, workshops, and educational courses might contribute to their favourable attitudes. Past studies support the idea that integrating critical MCE content into teacher training programs positively shapes preservice teachers' attitudes toward MCE, as highlighted by Aرسال (2019). Similarly, Cho and DeCastro-Ambrosetti (2005) noted that increased awareness and appreciation of diverse cultures led to improved MCE attitudes.

The discrepancy between teachers' positive attitudes towards MCE and their low implementation practices becomes evident in their failure to address and challenge cultural stereotypes during lessons on people, culture, and identity. Both teachers' and students' responses highlight an existing implementation gap in MCE given the higher ratings of MCE attitudes than practices. Hence, teachers are likely missing an opportunity to encourage critical thinking about cultural stereotypes. Such reluctance to challenge stereotypes might stem from concerns regarding the equitable representation of all groups and the pursuit of authentic diversity representation (Moland, 2015). Contrary to our findings, Durden et al. (2015) discovered that teachers in their study on culturally relevant pedagogy in the preschool classroom in the Midwest, USA actively engaged with cultural agents in the community, utilized diverse materials such as books, puzzles, family pictures, and

children's artwork, fostering a physically diverse classroom environment encompassing language, ethnicity, and gender. While our study did not delve into follow-up inquiries, the curriculum's broad perspective could imply a comprehensive approach to teaching culture-related topics, a practice less common in Nigeria.

In contrast to our findings, Aragona-Young and Sawyer (2018) identified American teachers who often made generalized definitions of culture, sparing specific identities, and exhibiting limited enthusiasm towards MCE practices. Our discovery of teachers' high MCE attitudes conflicting with low implementation practices contrasts with Huh et al.'s (2015) findings among South Korean educators, where a deeper multicultural understanding positively correlated with effective classroom implementation and resource utilization for MCE. This inconsistency indicates the complexity of contextual influences and pedagogical approaches affecting the actualisation of MCE in different educational settings.

Our observation of social studies classrooms revealed a stark reality: MCE instructional materials – excluding Nigerian political map found in 20% of the classes – including global photos, cultural artefacts, geographical maps, and cultural exhibition photos, were notably absent in 100% of the observed classrooms. This absence echoes findings from previous studies investigating the availability of instructional materials for teaching social education in Nigeria (Edeh et al., 2021; Okobia, 2011). The lack of these essential materials poses a significant challenge to effective multicultural teachings. Studies in Nigeria have consistently shown that students exposed to instructional materials in social studies achieve higher academic performance compared to those without such resources (Olayinka, 2016). This raises the possibility that teachers may require training in utilizing instructional materials for effective MCE implementation. Indeed, Eze and Nwagu (2021) emphasize the need for capacity building among teachers in Enugu state, Nigeria, particularly in employing innovative, learner-centred, and inclusive teaching strategies alongside instructional materials and media.

Our findings indicate the presence of institutional barriers hindering the effective implementation of MCE in Nigeria, despite the high reported level of multicultural attitudes among teachers. This discrepancy may be attributed to deficiencies in the quality of social studies teacher education or the absence of professional development training programs focusing on the practical implementation of MCE in Nigeria. Existing evidence suggests that integrating critical MCE content into teacher education programs positively influences the development of teachers' multicultural attitudes (Arsal, 2019). Furthermore, our findings align with studies highlighting the need to reverse the inadequacy and irregularity of teachers' professional development opportunities in Nigeria (Eze et al., 2022).

The findings suggest that multiple factors contribute to the inadequate practice of MCE, including language barriers, teachers' concerns about losing students' respect, time and financial constraints, and ethnoreligious intolerance. Addressing these challenges is crucial to enhancing MCE and resolving diversity issues in Nigeria. As previously highlighted by Garba (2013), integrating MCE content into social studies has the potential to foster trans-culturalism within the educational system. To achieve the goals of MCE in diverse settings like Nigeria, both personal and institutional limitations must be addressed. There is a potential for nurturing a multicultural democracy through the engagement of competent teachers in transformative practices.

While our study found that male and older teachers reported higher multicultural attitudes and practices compared to female and younger teachers, respectively, these differences were not statistically significant. Interestingly, Aktoprak et al. (2018) reported contrary findings, indicating that

younger and female teachers exhibited a more positive attitude toward MCE. In our context, societal norms such as mobility, might contribute to these differences, as cultural factors often enable men to be more outgoing, while older individuals may possess more disposable resources for exploring different environments. It's plausible that male and older teachers have had more exposure to diverse settings through travel, which could explain their higher attitudes toward multiculturalism. These findings underscore the potential implications for teacher training programs to address such variations.

## **Conclusion**

This study sheds light on the attitudes and practices of social studies teachers towards MCE in Nigeria. Despite harbouring positive attitudes towards MCE, teachers exhibit low implementation practices, a notable gap. This discrepancy may stem from an inadequate understanding of the concept of MCE, limited access to instructional materials, and institutional barriers hindering its effective execution. Contributing factors such as language barriers, teacher's apprehension about losing student respect, constraints related to time and finances, and ethnoreligious intolerance were identified as challenges affecting the effective implementation of MCE. Furthermore, male and older teachers displayed higher multicultural attitudes and practices compared to their female and younger counterparts, respectively.

Our findings underscore the pressing need for teacher training programs that incorporate critical MCE content and innovative, learner-centred teaching methodologies, along with the provision of relevant teaching resources. Ukpokodu (2011) emphasizes that multicultural and cultural competence should be prerequisites for educators of diverse subjects, analogous to the requirement of expertise in mathematics or science for teaching those subjects. Continuous professional development is imperative to equip teachers with the necessary skills for facilitating effective MCE in their classrooms. Initiating this training in teacher education institutions can establish a strong foundation for both preservice and early-career teachers. If needed, policy and curriculum reforms should reflect the contemporary realities of Nigeria as a multicultural nation, emphasizing inclusivity and social cohesion. These changes should address institutional and individual limitations to fully achieve the objectives of MCE within and beyond the classroom.

The study's outcomes provide a groundwork for future research endeavours regarding the implementation of MCE, not only in Nigeria but also in comparable settings with diverse cultural landscapes. There is a critical need to delve into the underlying individual factors influencing the poor practice of MCE and determine the necessary support mechanisms required to encourage increased interest and implementation of MCE strategies. This understanding is vital for fostering a more inclusive and culturally sensitive educational environment.

## **Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interests were reported by the authors.

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