


# Chapter 3


## Engaging P–20 Students Through Modern Social Studies Education

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Abstract (150–180 words) The chapter titled Engaging P-20 Students Through Modern Social Studies Education discusses how social studies can aid informed and participative democratic citizenship at the early childhood through higher education in a consistent P-20 continuum. It characterizes student engagement as a multidimensional construct (cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and civic) and describes the ways the dimensions are supported at the levels of preschool, K-12, and postsecondary. Based on constructivist, inquiry-based, experiential, and culturally responsive, and critical pedagogical traditions, the chapter suggests the shift of focus of content transmission to problem- and project-based learning that is related to real-world civic challenges. It underscores how vertical integration and developmentally relevant curricular planning should be based on compelling civic ideas and questions of big inquiry instead of piece meal coverage.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **The Significance of the Social Studies in the Democratic Societies**

Social studies education has been at core location in democratic societies as it has been preparing learners to be informed, responsible and participatory citizens. Social studies at its most basic level incorporates both history, geography, civics, economics, sociology, and political science to make students learn about social systems, democratic institutions, and civic duties (NCSS, 2013). In a fast globalizing world, when political polarization and digital transformation are on the rise, social studies have become more than a provider of content and now encompasses aspects of developing critical thinking, reasoning ethically, and civic agency (Banks, 2017).

Democratic societies require citizens who are able to assess evidence and be subjected to debate, are capable of considering the multiple perspectives and can be meaningfully involved in the life of the state. These democratic competencies are directly related to social studies education which is shaped to a sense of historical consciousness, civic literacy and social awareness (Dewey, 1916). It is also argued that well-taught students have a better chance to show civic knowledge and political efficacy, and long-term civic engagement when they were taught high-quality social studies (Kahne and Westheimer, 2006). The value of social studies, therefore, extends beyond being just a field of study in education, but rather a cornerstone to the success of democratic culture and social integration.

### **Problems of Student Involvement in Social Studies in the Contemporary World**

Although it is a relatively important subject in the society, social studies education continues to experience challenges in terms of student engagement. A great number of learners find social studies to be abstract, content-based, or not connected with their lived experiences and thus become engaged and end up learning superficially (Fitchett & Heafner, 2018). Curriculum overcrowding and high-stakes testing conditions have further pushed social studies as an educational background especially at the elementary level where the instructional time is usually shifted towards mathematics and literacy (Au, 2016).

Also, the emergence of digital media ecosystems changed the approach to the information access of students, introducing such issues as the misinformation problem, the problem of ideological echo chambers, and the deterioration of trust to civic institutions (Wineburg et al., 2016). The conventional teaching methods, including text book based teaching and practice sticking, are becoming too ineffective in

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