



# Framing Social Studies Education to Strengthen Social Protection Floors in Taraba State: Recognizing Emerging Governance Challenges and Political Will

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Abstract	Conference Article
<p>In Taraba State, Nigeria, social protection floors are very important for people's health and reducing poverty. Nonetheless, their efficacy is frequently compromised by deficiencies in governance and political will. This article looks at how social studies education could help make social protection floors stronger by encouraging critical thinking, civic engagement, and empathy. It identifies new problems that are arising because of weak institutions, corruption, poor coordination in governance, and a lack of commitment. It also talks about how competing interests and the politics of the election cycle can affect political will. Using Capability Approach Theory and Social Contract Theory, which stress people's ability to achieve well-being, the paper says that social studies education can give people the power to demand and take part in strong social protection systems. Recommendations encompass fortifying institutions, enhancing transparency and accountability, encouraging collaboration, and cultivating political will through an informed and engaged citizenry.</p>	
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Social Protection Floors, Social Studies Education, Political Will, Civic Engagement, Transparency.</p>	

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## Introductions

Social protection floors are a basic promise by governments to make sure that all citizens have access to basic services like healthcare, education, and basic income support (International Labour Organization, 2012). In Taraba State, Nigeria, where poverty and vulnerability are still big problems, strong social protection floors are important for improving people's lives, lowering inequality, and encouraging development that includes everyone (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Nonetheless, the efficient execution and longevity of these initiatives frequently encounter complex obstacles associated with governance and political will

(Onuoha et al., 2021). This article asserts that a strategically designed social studies curriculum can significantly contribute to the improvement of social protection frameworks in Taraba State. Social studies education can help communities demand accountability, take part in policy processes, and ultimately make social protection systems stronger by teaching people to think critically, get involved in their communities, and feel empathy for others. This paper will examine the connection between social studies education and social protection, pinpoint emerging challenges in governance and political will in Taraba State, and offer recommendations for utilizing social studies education to overcome these barriers.



## Conceptual Clarifications

The following conceptual clarifications are given to make sure that everyone understands the issues at hand:

**Social Protection Floors:** These are sets of basic social security guarantees that each country sets up. They should make sure that, at the very least, everyone who needs it has access to basic healthcare, basic income security for children, basic income security for people of working age who are unemployed or unable to work, and basic income security for older people (ILO, 2012).

**Social Studies Education:** This is a field of study that combines parts of the social sciences and the humanities, such as history, geography, economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology. In this article, it means the formal education system's teaching and learning processes that help students understand society, their responsibilities as citizens, and how social, economic, and political issues are all connected.

**Governance:** This term refers to the ways that power is used and decisions are made and carried out in a country or state. According to the World Bank (2007), good governance is based on accountability, openness, the rule of law, participation, and responsiveness.

**Political Will:** This term describes the true dedication and resolve of political leaders and policymakers to prioritize and execute particular policies and programs, encompassing the distribution of requisite resources and the surmounting of challenges (Hoffer & Hoffer, 1992).

## Theoretical Framework: The Capability Approach Theory

The Capability Approach Theory, which Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum came up with in 1999 and 2000, is what this article is based on. This theory changes the focus of development and well-being from just economic indicators to people's abilities—their real freedoms and chances to do things (beings and doings) that they have good reason to value. Social protection floors are important tools for helping people improve their skills by giving them

access to important resources and opportunities in areas like health, education, and economic security. When done right, social studies education can give people the knowledge, skills, and critical awareness they need to understand their rights, demand these rights, and help shape policies that improve social protection. By encouraging civic engagement and critical thinking about social and political systems, social studies education can help create a group of people who can fight for and help build strong social protection systems that give everyone in Taraba State more power.

Social Contract Theory is a key idea in modern political philosophy that helps us understand the relationship between the state and its citizens. It was mainly created in the 17th and 18th centuries by philosophers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In his important book *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes said that without a strong central authority, life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short," so people had to give up some of their freedoms to a sovereign in exchange for safety and social order. In *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), Locke improved on this idea by focusing on natural rights like life, liberty, and property and saying that a government is only legitimate if it protects these rights. In *The Social Contract* (1762), Rousseau built on the theory by supporting collective sovereignty. He said that true political authority comes from the general will and must reflect the common good of the people.

The main idea behind Social Contract Theory is that societies are built on an agreement, either explicit or implicit. Citizens agree to follow the laws and social norms, and the state is responsible for their safety, well-being, and fair treatment. This mutual relationship is what makes government legitimate. When governments don't do what they promised to do, whether it's because of corruption, neglect, or abuse of power, the social contract is broken. This can lead to instability, civil unrest, or a loss of trust in the government.

In today's world, social protection floors, which include things like health care, education, income support, and safety nets, are real examples of this social contract. They show that the government has

to make sure that people can get their basic needs met and that they are safe from social and economic problems. When done right, social protection programs show that people trust the government and make society more stable.

Social studies education is a very important part of this. Social studies gives people the knowledge and skills they need to understand and take part in the social contract by teaching them about their rights, responsibilities, government structures, and ways to hold people accountable. People who are educated are better able to ask for openness, judge how well the government is doing its job, fight against exploitation, and take part in making decisions. In this way, social studies creates a culture of responsibility and civic engagement, making sure that the social contract is not just a theory but something that is put into practice in everyday life and government.

In the end, Social Contract Theory reminds us that a society works best when everyone has a duty to each other. Citizens follow the law and take part in government, while the state protects them and provides for their needs. When one side doesn't do its job, social cohesion weakens. But when both sides do their jobs, the result is a stable, fair, and prosperous society.

### **Improving Social Protection Floors through Social Studies Education:**

In Taraba State, social studies education has a lot of potential to make social protection floors stronger through the following main ways:

**Encouraging Critical Thinking:** A good social studies curriculum can help students learn how to think critically about social protection policies, understand their basic principles, judge how well they work, and find ways to make them better. Students can learn how to have informed discussions and take part in evidence-based policy debates by encouraging them to ask questions and solve problems.

**Encouraging Civic Engagement:** Social studies classes, especially those that include civic education, can help students feel like they are responsible citizens and encourage them to get involved. Young

people can be empowered to hold their leaders accountable and take part in processes that shape social protection policies by learning about their rights and responsibilities, how government works, and why participation is important. This includes taking part in community discussions, speaking up for groups that are weak, and holding elected officials responsible.

**Cultivating Emotional Intelligence and Empathy:** Social studies education can enhance emotional intelligence and empathy by presenting students with varied perspectives, narratives, and the lived experiences of individuals encountering vulnerability and poverty. Students can learn more about how social protection policies affect people and why it's important to make sure everyone has equal access to basic needs by reading literature, doing case studies, and having discussions about social justice issues. This empathetic understanding can lead to more people supporting strong social safety nets.

### **New problems with governance in Taraba State:**

Even though social studies education has a lot of potential, there are some new problems with governance in Taraba State that could make it harder to put social protection floors into place and improve them:

**Institutional Weaknesses:** Government agencies in Taraba State that are in charge of planning, carrying out, and keeping an eye on social protection programs often have problems with not having enough staff, not having enough technical knowledge, not having enough infrastructure, and not having strong data management systems (Onuoha et al., 2021). These institutional flaws can cause inefficiencies, leaks, and not being able to effectively reach the people who need help.

**Corruption:** Corruption is still a big problem for good government and providing social services in Nigeria, including Taraba State (Transparency International, 2023). Corruption that takes money from the public directly cuts down on the resources available for social protection programs, which makes them less effective and keeps poverty and inequality going.

**Lack of Coordination:** When different government agencies, civil society groups, and international partners don't work together well on social protection efforts in Taraba State, it can lead to wasted resources, overlapping work, and gaps in service delivery. The absence of a unified and integrated strategy can impede the establishment of comprehensive and effective social protection systems.

#### **New Problems with Political Will in Taraba State:**

**Likewise,** various nascent challenges concerning political will may hinder the prioritization and ongoing support for social protection floors in Taraba State:

**Limited Commitment:** Even though there are statements and policy frameworks, political leaders in Taraba State may not be consistently and strongly committed to making social protection a top development goal. This limited commitment can show up as not enough money in the budget, programs that take too long to start, and not enough political support over time.

**Conflicting Interests:** Political leaders often have to deal with conflicting interests and priorities, such as building infrastructure and keeping people safe. These conflicting needs can take attention and money away from social protection programs, especially when these programs aren't seen as giving politicians quick political wins.

**Politics during election cycles:** Politicians who only care about short-term electoral gains may support populist policies that hurt the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of social protection programs. Politically, it might be more important to focus on quick, visible fixes than on building long-lasting and comprehensive social protection floors.

#### **Recommendations**

To deal with the problems that have been found and make the most of social studies education's potential to improve social protection floors in Taraba State, the following suggestions are made:

**Strengthen Institutions:** The government of Taraba State should make it a priority to improve the

institutional capacity of the agencies in charge of social protection by hiring more people, training them, building better infrastructure, and setting up strong systems for monitoring and evaluation.

**Encourage openness and responsibility:** To make sure that resources are used wisely and reach the right people, it is important to take steps to make government more open and accountable. This includes making budgets and spending related to social protection programs public and making anti-corruption systems stronger. People should learn about social studies in a way that encourages them to be honest and responsible.

**Encourage Collaboration:** The state government should set up good ways for all the people and groups involved in social protection, such as government agencies, civil society organizations, traditional leaders, and international partners, to work together. This will make sure that everyone is on the same page and working toward the same goal. Social studies can teach kids how important it is to work together and take action for the good of society.

To build long-term political will, social studies education needs to give people the critical thinking skills, knowledge of their rights and entitlements related to social protection, and ability to participate in civic life that they need. An informed and engaged populace can hold political leaders accountable and promote the prioritization of social protection frameworks. This includes stressing the long-term benefits of social protection for social stability and economic growth in the social studies curriculum.

#### **Conclusion**

Social protection floors are necessary to improve people's health and well-being and lower poverty in Taraba State. Governance and political will challenges make it hard to put them into action, but strategically framing social studies education is a great way to improve these important safety nets. Social studies education can help communities hold people accountable, take part in policy-making, and ultimately strengthen social protection systems by teaching people how to think critically, get involved in their communities, and develop empathy. To deal with the new problems of institutional weaknesses,

corruption, lack of coordination, limited political commitment, competing interests, and election cycle politics, we need to use a lot of different strategies. Taraba State can pave the way for stronger and fairer social protection floors by putting institutional strengthening, transparency and accountability, collaboration, and, most importantly, building political will through an informed and engaged citizenry empowered by a relevant social studies education. This will create a more just and prosperous society for all its citizens.

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