# ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION: A PANACEA TO OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract
*Nigeria faces a significant challenge with the rising number of out-of-school children, particularly in the arts and social sciences. The problem is compounded by factors such as poverty, insecurity, cultural barriers, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient teacher quality. This paper examines these challenges, highlighting the socio-economic and cultural factors that hinder children's access to education. Furthermore, it explores potential solutions, including increased government funding, improved teacher training, awareness campaigns, and the use of technology to reach underserved populations. The way forward requires a coordinated effort between the government, private sector, and communities to ensure that every child, regardless of their socio-economic background, has access to quality education in arts and social sciences. Addressing these barriers is critical for the nation's development and the empowerment of future generations.*

**Key words:** Arts and Social Sciences, Out-of-School Children, Education Challenges, Government Policy, Access to education.

## Introduction

Nigeria faces a significant challenge with a high number of out-of-school children, particularly in the northern regions and rural areas. According to reports, over 10 million Nigerian children are not enrolled in formal education, a situation worsened by poverty, cultural barriers, insecurity, and infrastructural deficiencies. This paper proposes that Arts and Social Science Education offers a unique solution to this problem by providing a more inclusive, engaging, and contextually relevant educational approach.

Arts and Social Science Education includes subjects like history, geography, social studies, political science, economics, music, drama, and fine arts. These subjects offer children an avenue to express themselves, understand their environment, and gain relevant life skills. When adapted to local contexts, they can address the root causes of school dropout and non-enrollment, such as a lack of cultural relevance in the curriculum and insufficient engagement with socio-economic realities.

## Review of Related Literature

The issue of out-of-school children in Nigeria is a critical concern that has been widely examined in both national and international literature. Several studies have explored the root causes of the problem and the potential solutions to ensure access to education for all children. This literature review presents an overview of the key findings on the role of

education in addressing out-of-school children, with a focus on the contributions of arts and social science education.

## Out-of-School Children in Nigeria

According to United Nations Children Emergency Fund, UNICEF (2020), Nigeria has one of the highest numbers of out-of-school children in the world, with approximately 10.5 million children not attending school. This situation is more pronounced in northern Nigeria, where cultural, economic, and security challenges create barriers to education. Mohammed & Abubakar (2016) highlight that poverty, early marriage, and the preference for Islamic education over formal schooling are key factors driving low enrollment rates in northern Nigeria.

Amoo and Kolawole (2021) argued that insecurity in northern regions, exacerbated by Boko Haram insurgency, has disrupted educational systems, leaving children particularly vulnerable to dropout. They emphasize the need for holistic interventions that address the socio-economic and cultural dimensions of the crisis.

## Arts and Social Science Education

Research shows that Arts and Social Science Education can play a transformative role in addressing the problem of out-of-school children. Ajayi and Afolabi (2012) argue that arts education fosters creativity, self-expression, and emotional development in students, which are critical to keeping children engaged in school. They suggest that integrating arts into the curriculum helps children develop critical thinking skills, enhances cultural appreciation, and nurtures a sense of identity.

Similarly, Adejumo (2010) posits that arts education in Nigeria is a tool for cultural identity formation, particularly in a multicultural society like Nigeria. Adejumo notes that through arts, students learn about their heritage, which can make education more relevant and appealing, especially in rural communities where cultural dissonance with formal education often leads to dropouts.

Social sciences, such as history, geography, and civic education, also contribute to addressing the out-of-school children issue by fostering civic responsibility and national unity. Olaniyan and Obadara (2008) emphasize the importance of social science education in promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for understanding and navigating socio-economic challenges. In regions affected by conflict, subjects like history and political science can help students understand the roots of these issues and develop strategies for peacebuilding.

## Educational Frameworks and Barriers to Education Access in Nigeria

The existing literature has identified several barriers that limit the effectiveness of arts and social science education in Nigeria. Olaniyan and Obadara (2008) point out that inadequate funding, teacher shortages, and poorly designed curricula hinder the delivery of quality education, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Amoo and Kolawole (2021) add that the lack of teacher training in arts and social sciences further undermines the potential of these subjects to engage students and reduce dropout rates.

A rigid curriculum is another significant barrier. Adebayo and Ibrahim (2017) suggest that the national curriculum often does not reflect the realities of rural communities, making education less relevant to students' lives. The authors call for more flexible curricula that incorporate local cultural elements and address the specific socio-economic needs of different regions.

**Policy Responses and Recommendations**
In response to these challenges, various policy recommendations have been proposed to leverage arts and social science education as a solution to the out-of-school children crisis. The Federal Ministry of Education's National Policy on Education (2017) emphasizes the importance of inclusive education and calls for a curriculum that integrates arts and social sciences to enhance student engagement and retention.

Several scholars advocate for the use of community-based education models that integrate arts and social sciences with traditional knowledge systems. Miller and Shweder (2007) argue that incorporating local cultural practices and knowledge into the curriculum can help bridge the gap between formal education and community values, making education more acceptable to parents and children.

Furthermore, UNESCO (2020) highlights the need for partnerships between governments, NGOs, and local communities to provide resources and infrastructure necessary for delivering quality arts and social science education. Such partnerships can also facilitate the training of teachers in creative and interactive pedagogical techniques, which are essential for sustaining student interest in these subjects.

**The Current State of Out-of-School Children in Nigeria**
Nigeria's out-of-school population is influenced by several factors:

- Socio-economic Issues: Many children from poor families are forced to work or engage in street hawking to supplement household incomes. Education becomes a secondary priority, especially for girls, who are more likely to be excluded due to cultural practices such as early marriage.
- Cultural Factors: In some communities, particularly in the north, traditional views about education often conflict with modern schooling systems. Religious and cultural beliefs may lead parents to prefer Quranic education for their children, especially boys.
- Insecurity: Insurgency, banditry, and kidnappings in parts of northern Nigeria have disrupted education systems. Many schools have been closed, and families fear sending their children to school.
- Infrastructure Deficiency: Rural areas suffer from a lack of schools, inadequate teaching staff, and poor learning facilities. These shortcomings discourage parents from enrolling their children, especially when schools are far from home or lack essential resources.

**The Role of Arts and Social Science Education in Addressing the Problem of out of school children in Nigeria**

Arts and Social Science Education can be an effective solution to tackle the issue of out-of-school children through the following ways:

1. Cultural and Social Relevance: Subjects like history and social studies can be tailored to reflect local realities, fostering a sense of identity and belonging. Children in rural communities, for example, can be taught in their native languages with locally relevant examples, making education more relatable.

2. Creative Engagement: Arts education offers children a creative outlet for self-expression, which can enhance their emotional and social development. Engaging in activities like drama, painting, and music makes learning more enjoyable, keeping children in school longer.

3. Skill Development: Beyond academics, arts and social sciences equip children with critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. These subjects encourage collaboration and discussion, preparing students to address the socio-economic issues they face daily. Vocational training in arts-related fields can also provide an income-generating path for disadvantaged youths.

4. Promoting Gender Equality: Programs that emphasize inclusivity and the benefits of education for both boys and girls can help combat gender stereotypes. By showcasing the success of women in social sciences or arts, education can become more appealing to girls, reducing dropout rates related to early marriage and gender discrimination.

5. Fostering National Unity: In a country with diverse ethnic groups, arts and social sciences promote understanding and tolerance of different cultures and religions. By emphasizing civic education and citizenship, these programs encourage social cohesion and peace, which are critical for rebuilding conflict-affected areas and ensuring safe learning environments.

**Barriers to Effective Implementation**

Despite the potential of arts and social science education to address the out-of-school challenge, several barriers must be addressed:

- Lack of Funding: Many rural schools lack adequate funding to introduce robust arts and social science programs. Teachers may not be sufficiently trained, and learning materials are often unavailable.

- Inadequate Teacher Training: Teachers, especially in rural areas, may not have the requisite knowledge or skills to teach arts and social sciences effectively. There is a need for professional development and continuous training to improve instructional quality.

- Curriculum Rigidity: The national curriculum may not always accommodate flexibility in teaching styles or subject matter, making it difficult for teachers to adapt lessons to local contexts.

- Parental Perceptions: Some parents, particularly in conservative communities, may not see the value in arts and social science education. There is a need for advocacy and

awareness programs that educate parents on the long-term benefits of a holistic education for their children.


## Conclusion

Arts and Social Science Education holds significant potential to address the issue of out-of-school children in Nigeria. By offering a curriculum that is engaging, culturally relevant, and socially impactful, these subjects can help retain students in school, equip them with valuable life skills, and promote long-term socio-economic development. However, for this approach to be successful, there needs to be a concerted effort by the government, educational stakeholders, NGOs, and local communities to address the existing barriers and fully integrate these programs into the education system. Through these efforts, Nigeria can work towards reducing its out-of-school population and ensuring that every child has access to a quality education.


## Recommendations

To effectively leverage Arts and Social Science Education as a panacea for out-of-school children, the following strategies are recommended:

1. Curriculum Reform: The government and education stakeholders should reform curricula to include more arts and social sciences, with a focus on locally relevant content. Special emphasis should be placed on developing critical thinking, cultural appreciation, and life skills.

2. Teacher Training: There should be investments in teacher training programs, particularly for educators in rural and marginalized communities. Workshops and continuous professional development are essential to equip teachers with the skills needed to deliver quality arts and social science education.

3. Community Engagement: Engaging communities and educating parents on the importance of arts and social sciences can help change perceptions about formal education. Programs that highlight the successes of education, especially for girls, can foster a more positive attitude towards schooling.

4. Partnerships with NGOs: Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focusing on education can play a critical role in supplementing government efforts, especially in providing resources, vocational training, and psychosocial support to children from marginalized communities.

5. Infrastructural Development: Investment in rural education infrastructure is vital. Schools must be equipped with the necessary facilities and materials to deliver comprehensive arts and social science programs. This includes ensuring that schools are accessible, safe, and conducive to learning.

6. Incorporating Technology: Digital tools and platforms can help overcome geographical barriers by making quality arts and social science education accessible to children in remote areas. E-learning initiatives, radio programs, and mobile classrooms are potential solutions.

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