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## **FROM SOCIAL STUDIES TO CIVIC EDUCATION: THE CHALLENGES OF CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA**

— — — **IDOWU, Samuel Otayinka** — — — —  
*Department of Social Studies  
School of Arts and Social Sciences,  
Michael Otedola College of Primary Education,  
Noforija, Epe, Lagos State, Nigeria.*

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### Introduction

Educational curriculum is the conventional policy document by which a given society echoes its efforts and desires to bring about citizenship reforms. The curriculum has always been the avenue through which socio-political expectations of the society are translated into knowledge, attitudes, values and skills learners within the school system are developed (Okebukola, 2004). Based on this, Nigeria's educational curriculum is tailored to reflect the national socio-political issues and concerns translated into national goals of education (Awoyemi, 1994). In solving the socio-political (citizenship) issues and concerns led to introducing Social Studies Education on experimental basis at the Aiyetoro Comprehensive High School in 1963. Socio-political (citizenship) issues and concerns are transformed into objectives and topics embedded into the Nigerian Social Studies Programme (NSSP) in the 1970s and 1980s. Social studies was designed to mediate young learners' construction of knowledge, dispositions, beliefs and skills to tackle issues and problems involving on democracy, human rights, good governance, environment and development, population as well as other challenges of effective citizenship development (Muyanda-Mutebi, 1994). The idea guiding social studies in Nigeria is founded

on the stance articulated by the United States' National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1992) that the subject should focus on helping young people to develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally varied, democratic society in an increasingly interdependent world. This paper examines the social studies curriculum implementation problems leading to the emergence of civic education curriculum and the probable implementation problems of the latter.

### Social Studies in Perspective

For young learner to think critically, act effectively and responsibly on public issues demands the appreciation of the terms of the issue, its origins, the alternative responses to it, and the likely results of these responses (Ogunyemi, 2011). Thus, cultivating the required competencies to respond to the 21st century issues and challenges entails developing an integrated curriculum with the goal of helping "learners synthesize discrete information and to connect such knowledge to the needs of everyday living" (Mathison and Freeman, 1997, p. 1).

Social Studies is the issue-based school subject designed and introduced as an innovative and value-oriented discipline with the goal of producing honest, committed, knowledgeable, patriotic and diligent citizens. As stated above, it emerged to solve problems arising from the pre-and-post independent periods and therefore the basic principles stimulating social studies in Nigeria is founded on young people developing the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of Nigeria (NCSS, 1992).

As a properly conceived school subject, social studies education provides a good and broad curriculum platform for achieving the goals of citizenship education. It is worth noting that social studies has become a school subject underpinning the philosophical and historical sustainability of the Nigerian state. The Nigerian Social Studies Project (NSSP) has been deeply knitted to the country's aspirations for nation building and national development. Like every other emerging nation, Nigeria's objectives as a country provide the pivot for its activities in the realms of curriculum development and education in general. Nigeria's belief in the African Social Studies Project (ASSP) was made

evident at its first national curriculum conference in 1969. The core message at the conference underpins Nigeria's need for a new crop of citizens who can effectively address its developmental challenges as a post-colonial state. The then Chief Federal Adviser on Education, Dr. S. J. Cookey, did acknowledge the place of Social Studies at the first national curriculum conference when he observed as follows:

I agree with those who say that citizens are made, not born, and I agree with those who believe that citizenship can be taught, If the understanding and practice of citizenship among Nigerians is a true measure of the Nigerian educational system, then that system has failed woefully, for we have tended to lead each one his (her) own individual life, and each family or group for itself. We have not yet begun to think of Nigeria as one and of each one of us as intrinsically part of the Nigerian society. This has been the tragedy of our past, and now is the opportunity to remedy the shortcomings of the past (Cookey, 1972: xxxi).

Cookey's submission dating back to 1969 is still relevant to today's Nigeria. The relevance of social studies is further confirmed by Votz and Nixon (1999) by stating that the core mission of a social studies curriculum is citizenship reform and transformation. Heafner (2008) adds that citizenship development is the pivot of any meaningful social studies education. According to her, "social studies make(s) a difference in individuals by educating and nurturing citizenship; advancing cultural awareness and perspective awareness; encouraging compassion and empathy for the powerless; promoting justice, tolerance, and democratic ideals; and developing an understanding of the borderless communities among workers, businesses, citizens, governments, individuals, and society. Therefore, the social studies curriculum should be at the forefront of educational dialogue and policies to ensure that students are prepared for effective citizenship and active participation in the (local, national and) global community" (Heafner, 2008, p.1). This is especially so if the curriculum adopts an issue or problem-oriented approach.

As an issue-oriented subject, social studies at both the Basic

Education (primary and junior secondary schools) levels is tailored towards making Nigerian children develop the ability to fit into the dynamic environment with the prospect of becoming responsible and disciplined citizens with the capability and willingness to contribute to the development of the Nigerian project and also to inculcate the right types of values. In addition, the revised curriculum is to make young learners develop a sense of understanding and appreciation of other people, cultural and historical diversity and those fundamental things that make them humans. Similarly, the social studies curriculum is designed to develop every child's capacity to recognise the many dimensions of being human in different cultural and social contexts; and develop a sense of solidarity and sharing based on a sense of security in one's own identity (NERDC, 2007). It could therefore be inferred that Nigeria appreciates the need for an issue-based social studies curriculum for its relevance in the 21st century schools.

Unfortunately, the expectation placed on social studies has not been achieved due to certain problems the subject has been facing. In fact, Okam (2008) averred that the National Policy on Education (2004) accepted Social Studies as an innovative curriculum for inculcating the norms and values associated with active citizenship among young learners in Nigerian schools. Unfortunately, most empirical research and available data in this direction have shown that, the virtue and norms of active citizenship are far from being achieved via social studies. The inability to achieve the desirable norms and virtues of citizenship, based on available empirical evidences are remote and *stricto sensu* professional problems and immediate as well as political problems of social studies.

#### Classroom Pedagogical Problems of Social studies

One of the classroom pedagogical problems of Social studies involved the content area which was criticised for teachers' faulty classroom emphasis which have no relationship with democratic (values, norms and virtues) citizenship education. The young learners were being fed with the traditional content of approach which educates the learners out of context in relationship to the environment in which to function as citizens (Okam, 2005). Also, literature depicts classroom trend in social studies which emphasise achievements and acquisition of

objectives relating to 'Cognitive Domains' at the serious neglect of 'Affective and Psycho-motor Domains' attainment (Okam, 1998). From these literature, classroom social studies implementation (teaching and learning) of issues have not been sufficiently used to 'Nigerianise' the young learners to become effective, informed and productive citizens within the Nigerian context.

Also, empirical studies have shown that the 'pedagogy' being employed in the teaching of social studies is faulty. Amrewodia (1999) agreed that the in-built methodology such as inquiry, problem-solving, critical thinking and decision-making procedures are relegated or abandoned in many classrooms. In addition, Ogundare (1984) and Okam (2002) confirmed that negligible number of social studies teachers (less than 20%) use appropriate methods-investigative-oriented procedures and approaches in their instructional strategies, in the social studies lessons. What these teachers do is to conceptualize the teaching of social studies as a mere reading subject, a mere sedimentary venture or chalk-talk affair.

There is also paucity of relevant infrastructural and instructional materials as confirmed by Lat (1998) in their studies which revealed, inter alia, that instruction in the social studies in schools and colleges have suffered because of the insufficiency and inadequacy in the supply of teaching/learning (aids/materials) resources including textbooks, resource rooms, etc. An issue-oriented subject requires a significant allocation of scarce classroom resources and extra effort by teachers (Vontz and Nixon, 1999). The implication of this is that teachers may continue with the familiar trend of teaching social studies as an "amalgam of the entire Social Science subject including humanities" (NERDC, 2007, p.v).

Regarding, 'evaluation' Okobiah (1985) and Okam (2005) showed that though the National Policy on Education did give prominence to social studies curriculum in its capacity to inculcate the right type of attitudes and virtues in the young learners through unified and interdisciplinary study of man. But studies have shown the concentration of evaluation on the cognitive domains. Evaluation focuses on the determination or measurement of the extent to which young learners retained factual materials or memorised someone else's ideas. Studies further showed total neglect of evaluating both

the affective and psychomotor domains.

Kosemani (1984) opined that social studies has all along being a victim of overwhelming presence and use of 'untrained and under-qualified teachers' who are ill-prepared "to function as curriculum implementers, evaluators and innovators" as social studies educators. Lat (1998) revealed that the general training of teachers as demanded by the epistemology and ontology of the curriculum structure intrinsically built into the subject has been unsatisfactory. Okam (2005) upheld the above submission by frowning at the practice of allotting the teaching of social studies to social science teachers (history, geography, economics, etc) who are trained as single-subject (specialist) teachers with different orientations- in terms of pedagogy and content. The implications of these are the wrong impression that these separatist teachers are also effective social studies teachers and that these unqualified single-subject (social sciences) teachers expectantly adopt their social science approach and pedagogy in the teaching of social studies content.

The immediate (political) problems of social studies borders on curriculum politics, and it is clearly palpable at federal government level which is the highest level of governance in the country. This problem is in relation to policy inconsistencies which constitutes a setback for the development of social studies education in Nigeria (Ogunyemi, 2009, 2010). Curriculum politics is causing more harm than good to the content and process of education. Also, over-politicization of the school subject led to the idea of dropping Social Studies at the senior secondary (SSS) level. It was this political decision that made Social Studies to lose its place within the SSS curriculum.

There is also the ordeal of curriculum marginalization which is not restricted to the Nigerian Social Studies program. In the United States of America social studies education field is moribund at the turn of the 21st century because of the unfavorable disposition of the government (Adler & Sim 2005). It was further reported that, despite the importance officially attributed to Social Studies in the national curricula, "it remains a low status subject, with little time allowed for the development of conceptual understanding and important skills" in Singapore. In South Korea, Jho (2006: 21) states that "the practice of social studies education aimed at promoting civic competence is

not clear". And in Finland, Social Studies is regarded as "somewhat an incoherent and ambiguous subject" (Virta, 2005). The most interesting thing about these reports of the 'decline' of Social Studies is that they have triggered genuine efforts aimed at advancing the course of social studies education which seems not to be the case with Nigeria.

There is also the resistance to social studies by teachers of the traditional social science subjects which is an old phenomenon in Nigeria. Resistance by separate subject specialists particularly in History and Geography and non-specialist school administrators never wished that Social Studies should survive (Wronski 1981 & Akinbote, 1995).

The last straw that broke the camel's back in the political problem of social studies were the two major excuses given by policy makers on the disarticulation of citizenship related issues from social studies are (a) that "it has become very wide and broad to teach it effectively" and that led to presidential directive that citizenship related issues be disarticulated from social studies (NERDC, 1987, p.v). it could be argued that disarticulating citizenship issues from social studies is more of executive fiat than product of deep insight and research. (Ogunyemi, 2010)

From the above submissions, I contend that though, social studies is an innovative curriculum package designed to enhance active citizenship among other objectives, yet there is a reflection of dissatisfaction which could be inferred in the way and manner the subject is being taught resulting in the inability to equip young learners with tools for national development. The social studies curriculum, as currently implemented in the school system has failed to prepare the young learners for citizenship responsibilities within the framework of democratic citizenship education. This could be responsible for the disarticulating citizenship contents and replacing by a new program of Civic Education.

#### Introduction of Civic Education

Both developing and long-standing democracies across continents recognised the need for citizenship reforms and thus are currently undertaking major steps towards actualising the reforms via reviewing and rethinking the need to introduce Civic Education. Westheimer's

(2003) expressed the view that school-based civic education programme can play a large role in educating students for active, reflective and practical citizenship. He asserts, "young people need to be taught to make democracy work, to engage civically, socially, and politically". This shows that the roles of educational institutions (schools) should not be ignored as vehicle for transmitting citizenship values via civic education curriculum.

Specifically, the roles of schools in the citizenship process must be emphasised and admitted by policy makers and educational planners as was evident in the United States when it was declared as 'a nation at risk' if drastic improvements were not made in the educational system. This led to Congressional leaders and Presidents Bush and Clinton, in the 1990s, heed the call of the National Commission on Civic Education renewal for greater attention specifically to Civic Education and since then, Civic Education has been the focus of public attention (Baraka, 2008).

#### Defining Civic Education

The Egyptian Ministry of Education (2006) define Civic Education as the education that forms skills and abilities of students, enabling them to take a vital part in socio-political life, creating civil believing in the values of democratic citizenship (Baraka, 2008). A more comprehensive and inclusive explanation of what constitutes Civic Education programs in international reports described Civic Education as educating youth on four components: 1) Human rights, which include empowering citizens to be able to engage in social development; 2) law, social justice and democracy, meaning political and civic participation; 3) development meaning human development as the basis of human rights; 4) peace, meaning peaceful resolution of conflict through negotiation and dialogue (UNDP, 2004).

Also, most classical Arabic scholars from the Middle East in the literature described the basis for civic education on the preaching and writings of Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet's saying and writings in relation to civic education depict the duty of every Muslim man and woman to seek education. The application of the concept of freedom of opinion was mentioned in the Islamic injunctions. The total freedom of opinion is a principle that was assured by Islam since it emerged,



and applied by the Prophet Muhammad and his successors (caliphs) especially in the time of Caliph Omar Ibn al Khattab. The Quran verses inspired the principles of dialogue and freedom of thought and expression to foster rational and critical thinking which Civic Education promotes (Baraka, 2008).

### The Nigerian Context of Civic Education

In Nigeria, evidences abound on citizenship problems and issues which prompted the Federal Government of Nigeria to introduce Civic Education curriculum as part of the citizenship reform programme under the 9-year Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy in 1999. The policy is based on the need to attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and by extension to complement the implementation of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) with the overarching goal citizenship value-reorientation. In view of this, Civics Education was re-introduced into the Nigerian educational curricular to be offered at the lower, middle and upper basic levels.

The goals of Civics Education curriculum are derived from the general goals of the UBE meant to address young Nigerian learners in their formative educational stage. That is, to tackle issues which are germane to developing young Nigerians into responsible, informed and effective citizens. Furthermore, the curriculum is meant to develop knowledge and skills which will equip young learners to deal with various social, political, economic and personal issues. Moreover, civic education is to enable learners imbibe the values, norms, knowledge and actions which will empower Nigerians to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To this end, the curriculum has been designed to pay attention to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in addition to accomplishing the critical elements of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS).

### Civic Education Implementation Challenges

Available authorities reveal that implementation of policy and programmes has been an incontrovertible problem and issue not only in Nigeria but in Africa and even developed democracies. Ejere

(2011) confirmed this by submitting that it is hardly debatable that implementation is the bane of public policies and programmes in Nigeria. He went further to state that a well formulated policy or programme is useless if not properly implemented as its stated objectives will not be realized' (p. 1). Also, Baraka (2008) writing on the Egyptian experience stated that after developing a new curriculum for reforms and transformation, it is important to take cognizance of the challenges inherent in its implementation. Such challenges should be examined within the current administrative and political structure of the country. Kidwell (2005) writing on the implementation of civic education in the United States inferred that the absence of high quality implementation of civic education curriculum programme may have adverse effects on the teaching of civic concepts, values and skills that reinforce reasoned decision-making skill, evaluation of information, practical application of civic virtues and an in-depth understanding of citizenship responsibility. He further submitted that, in the United States, though the goals of a strong civic education programme are touted in almost every school mission statement, little effort is made towards achieving the goals because of poor implementation. 'Civic education, as determined by state policy in US, remains under-emphasized in classrooms of all grade levels due substantially to implementation oversight. Implementation problems have led, inter alia, to lack of systematic development, articulation and programmatic standardization of civic education practices and documented student learning' (Kidwell, 2005 p).

The poor performance of many public policies and programmes in Nigeria, in terms of the achievement of their specified objectives arise primarily from implementation failure. The Education for All (EFA) Regional overview report, highlights the situation in sub-saharan countries and Nigeria as countries at serious risk of not achieving the universal primary education goals. The report defines serious risk as furthest to go and moving away from goal or progress too slow. The same goes for the adult literacy and gender parity goals. With an Education for all Development Index (EDI) of less than 0.8, Nigeria is among 16 countries in sub-Sharan Africa very far from achieving EFA goals. (The Nation Thursday, October 16, 2008). Moreover, in the Global competitiveness report for the period 2009-2010, Nigeria's

primary education level was ranked 132nd out of the 133 countries that were surveyed (Ejere (2011) citing Daily Sun Monday, October 12, 2009). It is pertinent to examine the factors that may lead to ineffective implementation of the civic education and subsequent failure of the programme in Nigeria.

There is an inconsistency in policies / programmes formulation. In fact, policies / programmes change like the wind vane with every successive government. An example of a previous programme in the sector that suffered implementation failure was the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme which was the forerunner to the present Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. The UBE programme was introduced in 1999 seemingly as a replacement for the UPE programme which was launched in 1976 but later abandoned. But the UBE, like the UPE before it, is experiencing implementation difficulties.

Another factor which may impede implementation is what, Ogunyemi (2011) referred to as the 'quick-fixes' (curriculum culture). He reiterated the need for caution against 'quick-fixes' (curriculum culture) as demonstrated in the instance of the newly introduced civic education. For any unfocused curriculum innovation or re-invention may end up creating more confusion in the school system than it sets out to solve. This is especially because most curriculum projects in Nigeria are hardly accompanied with the necessary testing and teacher re-orientation and training (Ogunyemi, 2006). Ivowi (1984) confirmed this unprofessional trend in curriculum development by saying that:

Apart from a few cases, proper planning to allow a step by step development of curriculum projects has not taken place. Trial testing of materials has occurred only in projects developed by one organization. Even with the programmers for the JSS where adequate notice was given for the introduction of the new system, pilot testing of materials before their installation into the entire school system did not occur (Ivowi, 1984:354). Obioma (2007) acknowledged the fact that the design and development of the curriculum programme was done within a short period. Then, one should ask: could this civic education curriculum be another victim of 'quick fixes' syndrome as earlier advanced by Ogunyemi, (2011)

Alani (2002) also noted that the implementation of the Universal

Basic Education programme, (from which the civic education curriculum emanated), is characterized by ineffective planning as manifested in the areas of human and material resources development (in-service training programmes) for teachers, inadequate provision of instructional materials, equipment, physical infrastructures, insufficient funding and inadequate supervision and monitoring. Badejo (2005) similarly, envisaged these problems such as inadequate instructional resources involving libraries, educational technology center, etc. Confirming above submission, Omokhodion, (2008) indicated that shortage of equipment, infrastructure, textbooks and instructional materials are undermining the successful implementation of the UBE programme. Without the provision of adequate textbooks and instructional materials, it will be difficult to implement the school curriculum. All these attests to the 'quick fixes' syndrome pointed out by Ogunyemi.

Comparatively, this was not the position in Kenya, as stated by Ogula, (1995), when the government decided to undertake far-reaching changes in the primary and secondary education, starting with the development of new curricula accompanied by the development of new curriculum materials. It also set guidelines for subject panels on the design, development, implementation and evaluation of the new curriculum. Curriculum development teams consisted of practicing teachers, university lecturers, inspectors of schools, lecturers from teacher colleges, examination secretaries, and representatives of the Kenya National Union of Teachers. The new curriculum for the various school levels was implemented on gradual (yearly) basis- 1986- Form 1, 1987- Form 2, 1988-Form 3, 1989-Form 4, which was not the situation in Nigeria. This is because of what Alani (2002) and Badejo (2005) referred to as ineffective planning as manifested in the areas of human and material resources development, among other reasons and Obioma (2007) acknowledged this by stating that the review, design and development of the new curriculum programme was done within a short period which further attested to the 'quick fixes' syndrome by Ogunyemi (2011)&Ivowi (1984). Also, the implementation of the new education curricula called for the training of teachers to orientate them on the new system, and to keep them abreast of new approaches and changes. The Ministry of Education conducted various in-service

courses for teachers in 1986 and 1987, many of whom found them useful. However, there is no evidence to suggest a similar occurrence in Nigeria. Nevertheless, Kenya had its own problem of curriculum implementation in funding. This is because the government could no longer give financial assistance to the ministry of education to continue with the in-service training programmes for the teachers. Consequently, there was a big gap between the planned curriculum and the curriculum as translated and taught by teachers. This is because teachers were required to implement a curriculum that most of them did not understand. Although inspectors of schools demonstrated commitment to curriculum reform, most of them were ineffective in giving teachers the required guidance. This was mainly because they themselves had not been trained adequately (Ogula,1995).

#### Concluding Remarks

For a relatively new civic education curriculum programme to surmount socio-political issues of effective citizenship, government must show the attitudinal reorientation by displaying the right political will towards thorough implementation. The same zeal and enthusiasm with which policy was articulated must also be used to ensure effective and high quality implementation. Government at the three levels should realize that programme implementation is the required synergy between programme goals and performance. Therefore, programme performance depends on the quality and effectiveness of implementation. There is need for government to test run and evaluate curriculum prior to its actual implementation. Also, accurate data and participation of stakeholders like classroom teachers, inter alia, are required for sufficient planning and effective implementation of civic education in Nigeria. Also, strict adherences to the implementation strategies under an enabling milieu help to attain curriculum goals. Thus, various barriers to effective implementation of civic education programme in Nigeria that have been explained should be addressed seriously and effectively tackled.

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