
**SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM FOR
EFFECTIVE CITIZENSHIP PARTICIPATION
IN ELECTIONEERING PROCESSES
IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Nigeria is faced with a lot of challenges, which include social, political, and civic issues with their consequences. These challenges emerged from the attitudes of citizens toward socio-civic duties, especially citizens who had passed through the Social Studies classroom. This paper examines the ability of the Social Studies curriculum in equipping citizens for effective participation in electioneering processes in Nigeria. It also examines the concept of electioneering, Social Studies curriculum objectives; challenges facing the electioneering processes in Nigeria. It concluded that Social Studies curriculum is robust enough to engineer active, effective and efficient citizens' participation in Nigeria. On the bases of the conclusions, it suggests that socio-civic education should be taught at all levels of education; and at political gatherings; Social Studies experts should be engaged during the electioneering process to educate voters on their socio-civic rights and duties.

Keyword: *Electioneering, Social Studies, Curriculum, Citizenship Participation*

Introduction

The Social Studies curriculum is considered a working tool geared toward enabling man to identify his problems significantly and adequately seek solutions to the identified problems. Despite this, Nigerian citizens who passed through Social Studies classrooms still display apathy towards electioneering processes. Meanwhile, the Social Studies curriculum is designed to build socio-civic literacy in a man's democratic and contemporary nature for active participation in the democratic and development process (Ogundare & Jekayinfa, 2017). Yet, it has been observed that citizens have little knowledge of electioneering while some chooses not to participate in the processes thereby limiting their roles as active citizens. Officially, Social Studies was introduced into the school curriculum in Nigeria as a tool for the promotion of national consciousness and unity, self-reliance, and contribution toward national development.

Since the return to civil rule in 1999, Nigeria had seen explosion of knowledge which demonstrates that, there is a connection between Social Studies curriculum and effective citizenship participation in electioneering processes. This connotes that adequate knowledge of Social Studies may change the narratives and increase knowledge in terms of different types of electioneering processes such as registering for voter's card, collection of voter's cards, and voting in the elections amongst other elements as contributions to the success of the nation. Electioneering processes does not start and end with voting only (Agbamelu, 2013;Sanni, 2015), and upon various activities involved, some citizens still display low interest in electioneering matters and participation (Onigiobi, Obadiora & Oriowo, 2020). Thus, activities during electioneering processes comprise continuous voter registration exercise, collection of voters card, training of election staff, electoral law, political party primary, party internal democracy, campaign, campaign funding, voting, collation of results, and announcement of the results and declaration of the winner.

Meanwhile, it is no longer out of place bearing in mind the massive information in the public domain to say that, the success of every nation depends on citizens that are knowledgeable, rational and critical thinking and ready to contribute to the nuances of development as it improves the lots of a nation (Coley & Sum, 2012).

Omilusi (2020) informed that electioneering processes in Nigeria are characterized by so many problems, such as citizens refusal to register for voter's card, those registered refusal to collect, voter's refusal to go to ballot citing rigging, violent campaigns, hate speeches, winners take it all and losers refusing to accept results which sometimes leads to killings among other numerous problems. Notwithstanding these problems mentioned, individuals are expected to participate effectively in electioneering processes because citizens' awareness and participation in electioneering are germane to every democracy as it helps government to take decisions, monitor its implementation, and evaluate the outcome of the decisions taken.

Elekwa and Eme cited in Olaleye and Adebawale (2021) succinctly averred that citizens use their participation to represent and hold their leaders accountable in terms of policies decisions and implementations. What then has been the level of citizenship participation in electioneering in Nigeria and how is the knowledge of Social Studies impacting in the electorates with regards to their participation in different processes? Thus, this study assesses Social Studies curriculum strength in equipping citizens' to participate efficiently in the electioneering process, their challenges, and solutions that would enhance citizens' participation in electioneering processes in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

The definition of Social Studies varies from one country to another depending on the objectives set by the country. Based on the literatures reviewed, Social Studies is the study of man's relationship with his environment. Hence, the subject is designed to inculcate in individuals basic and effective reasoning ability and capacity for social life, political participation and development

mind as functional citizens (Abubakar, 2013). He went further to reveal that the content of Social Studies could develop citizens' positive attitudes, skills, knowledge, values, and competence that spurs them contribute to the development and welfare of society. Interestingly, several experts and theorists have articulated that Social Studies is concerned with giving people, especially the youth knowledge and skills to understand, challenge and engage political actors with democratic processes including politics, law, media, and economy to mention but few (Oluwagbohunmi, 2017).

Corroborating the above thought, Okam and Bozimo cited in Edinyang, Effiom, Effiom, and Ushie (2020) states that Social Studies as a vital tool for national development and if the content is effectively utilized should prepare students to fit in well in their culture. In essence, Social Studies is a life-shaping type of education that aims at inculcating knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes in all ramifications for personal and societal betterment. It is also a tool that can be used to inculcate in individual ability to learn daily, think critically, act rationally, live harmoniously, and accommodate adequately every member of the community and also help in educating those who had no opportunity of attending former school to pass through Social Studies curriculum (Idowu&Ojo, 2022). Going by the above definitions of Social Studies, it indicates that it is all about man and his environment and the way he lives among his fellow men in a hierarchical structure. Man's world is all about interaction and Social Studies thus becomes an amplifier for a better socio-civic living in the 21st century.

Electioneering processes do not begin and end with voting rather it is the totality of activities covering different stages and elements such as registration of political parties, registration of political party members, registration for voter's cards, collection of permanent voter's cards, attending political party primary to choose a party flag bearer, strengthening of electoral law, campaign, campaign funding, voting, collation of results, the announcement of results and declaration of the winner (Ekwueme & Folarin, 2017; Nkwede, 2019). These stages and elements are

time bound and contribute to the success of the electioneering processes. Hence, all aspects are as important as others.

Electioneering process is the period during which the actors involved make strong political statements and equally educate the electorates politically. It is a period for re-orientation of voters in terms of their rights, needs, and expectations from the would-be leaders. It is also a period during which the would-be leaders sell their intentions (manifestoes) to the citizens. Electoral processes are very important in the life of governance as it builds a relationship between candidates and citizens. In Nigeria, the reverse is the case as multiple issues arise with electioneering processes. Issues ranging from citizens' refusal to register for voter's card, some of those who registered refusing to collect the voter's card, those who collected refusing to vote; some did multiple registrations and it resulted to invalid registration, corruption, bribery, threat, bullying of voters with hate speech (character assassination), intimidation, buying of voter's card, stealing of electoral sensitive materials, disruption of voting and snatching of ballot boxes to mention but a few (Onigiobi, Obadiora, & Oriowo, 2020; Olaleye & Adebawale, 2021). Electioneering processes in terms of the campaigns raises issues like intimidation of opponents, violence against opponent supporters (attacks on their lives, injury and some killed), disregard for electoral law, bribery, and misappropriation of campaign funds amongst others (Apuke & Tunca, 2018).

Going forward, electioneering processes is expected to engage citizens actively not passively since it is a way of improving the nation but Nigerian citizens seem to be aloof with the processes either because of their bad experiences, unmet needs, or life preservation due to violence that mark some electoral processes. Arowolo and Aluko (2010) asserted that electioneering processes set out to influence the voters and aid them in making choices and equip them with adequate knowledge that would help them to participate actively without fear or favour.

The Social Studies knowledge cum electioneering processes and the elements involved should equip the citizens for making rational decisions to participate, choose good leaders and hold

them accountable. This is evidenced in Nigeria since the return to democratic rule in 1999, ineffective participation of the citizens in the electioneering process has kept Nigeria in a sorry state of massive unemployment, insecurity, inflation in the economy, decay infrastructure, lack of basic amenities, above all; decadence in education and health sectors (Abimbola & Adesote, 2012).

All the issues mentioned above do not indicate that citizens have acquired Social Studies knowledge and if nothing is done, it would keep Nigeria in a quagmire of delay, hinder her all round improvement and jeopardize the national objectives as stipulated in National Policy on Education (National Policy on Education, NPC, 2014). The policy emphasized that Nigerians are to “live in unity as one indivisible, an indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principle of freedom, equality, and justice” while education is also said to be a tool for national development and change.

Anchoring on the above policy statement, and the enormous data on different stages and elements of electioneering processes in the public domain, yet there is still a gap in the contribution of Social Studies to citizenship participation knowing fully well that its contents cover democratic knowledge. This keeps some authors wondering why citizens who have such knowledge would still be passive in electioneering processes. Such authors are Oboh (2017) and Nkwede (2019) who posited that the knowledge of socio-civic literacy acquired by citizens whether inside or outside the classroom should enable them to be well equipped with the attitude of social responsibility, of which participating in electioneering processes is one of them.

Social Studies Curriculum vis a vis Electioneering Processes

Social Studies curriculum did not outrightly state electioneering processes or even elections as one of the topics but some topics bordered on socio-civic knowledge which is core to Social Studies vis-a-vis how to live and participate in the affairs of the

community; social values; promoting peaceful living in our society; conflict management, ability to contribute to the development of the community; social skills, and attitudes. All these topics point to electioneering processes. Adequate teaching of these topics with employment of student and activity-centered teaching methods, citizens are expected to be efficient in electioneering matters.

Buttressing further the low citizens' participation in electioneering process experiences in Nigeria, Saliu and Ayinde (2018) revealed that electioneering processes in the country experiences low participation yet, there is a marked increase in irregularities- money bags, hate speech, different types of violence and even loss of life. The authors further elucidated that, there are many other avenues by which the citizens can participate in electioneering processes in Nigeria apart from registration of voters' card, collection of voter's card, campaign, amongst others earlier mentioned. Other noticeable apathy of Nigerians are in form of low-attendance in political meetings in order to gain information on governance, volunteering to educate others politically, and signing petitions among others.

Implicitly, citizens who had contact with Social Studies should be an actual ambassador, promoter and educationist of socio-civic knowledge everywhere including electioneering affairs. Ideally, starting from the point of campaign, voting, counting of votes, collation of results, and announcement of the winners by the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC), Nigerians should participate actively. Studies such as Ezeibe (2015) and Okoro and Tsegysu (2017) found out that citizens' participation in electioneering processes determines the outcome of the elections and the impact of socio-communication on the processes.

Suffice to say that Social Studies should equip citizens with the knowledge that would make them rational and competent in order to understand the ideas of electioneering processes presented to them. Several studies such as Alao and Nwogwugwu (2013), Omilusi, (2020), and Uwechue (2019) asserted that there are different electioneering processes in existence and it is

surprising that Nigerians are passively participating in them especially party campaigns. They further revealed that citizens' low participation may be because of unfulfilled campaign promises made during the electioneering period. The citizens are being bribed by the candidates to vote for them without any intention of keeping the promises made and the electorates in turn cannot hold the government accountable due to system abnormalities. Even though, there are different electoral laws in Nigeria, still Nigerians are skeptical about electioneering processes. Since the return to civil rule, Nigeria's electoral processes have been hijacked (Omilus, 2020) by people who are believed to have had Social Studies knowledge yet, it seems that their interest were to serve themselves, their families and friends. Uwechue (2019) believes that Nigeria's democracy has been disabled by people who should know better while electoral crimes have been left unpunished. This unpunished electioneering crime necessitated calls for active citizen participation especially in the 21st-century Nigeria.

Challenges facing electioneering Processes in Nigeria

From the foregoing, Nigerians cry for change in the electioneering processes, and upholding the benefits of the processes looks slim. The difference between what is obtainable in Nigeria and elsewhere or what is taught in the classroom and field experience speaks volumes of the pedigree of the elections in the country. The classroom lessons and field experience sometimes prompt questions like are citizens taught in the classroom different from citizens on the field? Are some citizens who had privilege of passing through Social Studies curriculum whether old or young well equipped? How then should they be behaving differently? This is why Ezeibe (2015) posited that with right political, socio-civic education, citizens will participate in electioneering processes. Maphunye (2016) states that, in Nigeria, the political leaders may have been discouraging citizens in participating in electioneering with their lack of assurance in safeguarding their lives and properties. In his words "The leaders' signs pact to

safeguard the peace and interest of their supporters yet, such pacts are broken by the political leaders themselves” (Pg 3).

The chronic decline of the political system during the electioneering period scares citizens from participating effectively even with their knowledge of Social Studies. Hence, the electioneering period is an avenue for decision-making by the electorate on whether to continue with old ways or to end poverty, decay of the education and health sector, insecurity, and others. Since the beginning of Nigeria’s electioneering processes during the colonial era to date, politics have been characterized by all forms of undemocratic acts (Isma’ila & Othman, 2015). Such undemocratic acts are unwillingness of voters to register, unwillingness to collect permanent voter’s cards, unwillingness to vote, imposition of candidates, rigging, stuffing the ballot box, hate speech, violence, and electoral body complicity amongst others. Ezeibe (2015) supporting earlier assertion with the view of Ibrahim (2007) opined that the mode of conduct of the electioneering process in Africa and Nigeria, in particular, threatens the survival of democracy and makes its future bleak while citizens’ life is threatened in the process.

Explicitly expressed, Nwabueze cited in Ibrahim (2009) informed that corruption, bribery, undue influence, intimidation, unreliable voters, falsification of results and announcement, and all forms of manipulation characterizes Nigerian electioneering processes and it endangers democracy. Meanwhile, Ebirim (2013) decries the high rate of electoral malpractice. The author describes electoral malpractice as a process by which political actors flout the rules and regulations guiding electoral processes. Hence, political actors, politicians, and political parties’ quest to secure power, by all means, threatens the fabrics of electioneering processes in Nigeria and water it down to nothing with negative end. For instance, in Nigeria, hate speech is prominent as some political parties employ it as a tool to clinch power. Also, the electoral institute that is expected to be clean is sometimes found wanting in some areas, such as producing accurate voters’ register, counting of ballots, collating accurate results amongst others.

To buttress the challenges of electioneering processes further, the International Institute of Democratic and Electoral Assistance (IDEA, 2014) reviewed that, the Nigerian electoral system's major problems are lack of autonomy and funding of her independent electoral body. It is not hidden that the autonomy and funds of the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) come from the government.

Against this backdrop, Isma'ila and Othman (2015) listed some problems pertinent to Nigeria's electioneering processes. The problems include: lack of discipline in the forms, spirit, and implementation of electoral processes, excessive monetization of the processes, the philosophy of "winner takes it all" and the loser is seen as an outcast, high levels of poverty, illiteracy, ethnicity, and religious extremism, the unclear political ideology underpinning the political party philosophy, political corruption amongst others, all these goes in a cycle which ends in bad governance. The undue pressure exerts on the fabric of democracy in Nigeria results in the underdevelopment, frustration, and political apathy experienced today.

Conclusion

It is evident that the unfolding events in the country in the recent past point to the fact that Nigeria is fast losing its grip to conduct free and fair elections as a result of unprecedented challenges facing its electioneering processes (Omilus, 2020). The challenges range from citizens' refusal to register for voter's card, some of those who registered refusal to collect the voter's card, and those who collected refusal to vote; some do multiple registrations, which result in invalid registration, corruption, bribery, threat, bullying of voters with hate speech (character assassination), intimidation, buying of voters' cards, stealing of electoral sensitive materials, disruption of voting and snatching of ballot boxes to mention but a few. Social Studies curriculum have been designed to inculcate knowledge, values, skills, attitudes, and competence in individuals in order for them to become fit and functional citizens. As Nigeria aspires to meet up with global 21st century

trends in electioneering processes, she must adopt the best practices from around the world and strive to blend and integrate Social Studies tenets into her electioneering processes. With increased funding of social studies education and on teachers' capacity building, constant utilization of the tenets and knowledge gained by the individual in the society, and proper engagement of those who passed through social studies classroom in electoral matters, the initial and emerging challenges can be minimized to a bearable level to usher in an improved electioneering processes in Nigerian political landscape.

Suggestions

Based on the study, the following recommendations are made that more studies are needed to examine how individuals who were in social studies classroom are using activity-centered curriculum to prepare citizens for effective participation in electioneering processes. Also, there must be a deeper understanding of the impact of individuals' low participation in running electioneering processes. There is need to engage Social Studies experts during electioneering processes to bring in their wealth of experience to educate the voters through advocacy programmes. They should be engaged to educate voters on civic responsibilities and effective participation in electioneering as citizens. Social Studies also should be taught at the political settings, because it does not only inculcate rational and critical thinking about knowledge and skills, but also inculcate desirable attitudes and competence in an individual for social and civic duties, of which participation in electioneering processes is paramount.

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