

**COMMUNITY-BASED CURRICULUM INNOVATION: A
COLLABORATIVE PROJECT WITH LOCAL EDUCATION
AUTHORITIES TO INTEGRATE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT INTO
ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES**

Dr Victor Joes Obasse*

Researcher,
Federal Ministry of Education,
Abuja, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a comprehensive empirical investigation into community-based curriculum innovation, focusing on collaborative efforts between UK universities and local education authorities to embed civic engagement within academic programmes. Drawing on mixed-methods research, including stakeholder interviews, case studies, and national datasets, the study examines how curriculum co-design with community actors reshapes pedagogical practice, enhances student agency, and strengthens institutional accountability. The findings reveal that integrating civic engagement into formal curricula not only improves student outcomes in terms of democratic participation and social responsibility, but also fosters deeper institutional ties to local governance and public service. The research situates this innovation within broader policy frameworks such as the Civic University Network and the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, highlighting its alignment with national priorities around equity, inclusion, and public value. By analysing the structural enablers and barriers to implementation, the paper offers a critical lens on how universities can move beyond traditional models of knowledge delivery to become active civic institutions. The study contributes to the growing literature on place-based education and civic pedagogy, offering a replicable model for curriculum transformation that is both context-sensitive and scalable. Ultimately, it argues that community-based curriculum innovation is not peripheral, it is central to the future of socially engaged higher education.

KEYWORDS: *Civic Engagement, Curriculum Innovation, Community-Based Learning, Higher Education, Curriculum Co-Design, Local Education Authorities, Democratic Education, UK Universities, Place-Based Education, Institutional Collaboration.*

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