

EDUCATION AND NATIONAL UNITY

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ABSTRACT

Education is the process of changing people's behaviour so they can fit into the society appropriately. National unity is the process of bringing together a variety of individuals from distinct cultural, ethnic, tribal, and social backgrounds in a specific setting or polity for a common good. The paper highlights the educational policies that were created to support Nigeria's unification. This paper examined the function of education as well as the significance of education in fostering national cohesion. Our nation, Nigeria, is more united thanks in large part to education. Some of the government initiatives to support Nigerian unity include the National Youth Service Corps, Federalism, revenue sharing among the states of the federation, moving the capital of Nigeria from Lagos to Abuja, and state creation. In this work, the value of national unity was also discussed. Nepotism, corruption, our leaders' lack of political will, religious discrimination, militancy, an unbalanced system of government, terrorism, and Fulani herders conflicts generated against farmers in their native places are some of the difficulties working against national unity. The paper has suggestions for fostering national harmony.

Keywords: Education, Nation, Unity, National Unity, Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria is made up of numerous tribes, ethnic groupings, and cultural traditions. It has around 527 languages and 1,150 dialects (Abraham, 2017). There were three major ethnic groups in Nigeria: the Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. Our colonial overlords then divided it into protectorates for the north and south, which they then merged in 1914. This merging was done to unify the nation and make management simpler. It is quite unfortunate that all of our colonial overlords' attempts to influence the current administration have failed. Due to marginalization and the unequal distribution of resources and opportunity, several regions of

the country have sought and are continuously making attempts to secede. Nigeria has worked hard to maintain its unity as a whole. Education is one of the most effective national unifying strategies, among the many others that have been used. The foundation of human existence is education, and it is crucial to maintaining the unity of this country.

Concept of Education

According to Nwagwu (2007), Education is defined as a process by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, Skills, and attitudes in its cultural settings and heritage to foster and guarantee its survival. According to Okafor (2014), education is defined as a process of acculturation through which individuals help to attain the development of their and their maximum activation when necessary according to the right reason and to achieve thereby his perfect self-fulfillment. In the same vein, Chuahan (2009) defines education as the shaping of behaviour or behaviour modification of individuals for adequate adjustment in society. According to Mbakwe (2015), education is believed to be a behavior change, the change can either be overt-open or covert hidden, it can be positive or negative depending on the quality of education provided and, on the person, who provides the educative experience. Ukeje (2009), views education from three perspectives; as a process; a product, and as a discipline. Viewed as a process, education means change by which we acquire the civilization of the past and enable it to take in the civilization of the present and make the civilization of the present, the civilization of the future. As a product, education is behavior change and as a discipline, education is the body of organized knowledge. Therefore education embraces all forms of training: formal and informal, non-formal and indigenous, it inculcates the right upbringing in the going.

Aims and Objectives of Nigerian Education

According to the National policy on education (FGN 2014:40), is to national consciousness and national unity, values, and attitudes for the survival of individualist and Nigerian society. However, the Nigerian policy on education avers that the objectives of Nigerian education include:

- i. A free and Democratic society. According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (9th edition), is a belief in political freedom and equality. Therefore, there can't be democracy without freedom. Freedom is man's natural gift. In a democratic society, people freely choose their leaders.
- ii. A just and egalitarian society: A just and egalitarian society refers to a society where merit takes precedence over mediocrity and everyone is equal before the law.
- iii. A great and dynamic economy. This refers to a nation whose economic resource is diversified. Nigeria's dependence on crude oil should be shifted to other sectors of the economy to have a dynamic economy.
- iv. A united strong and self-Reliant Nation. No nation can achieve unity and strength the without being self-reliant.
- v. A Land is bright and full of opportunities for all citizens. Once a free and democratic society, a united, strong, and self-reliant, and a great and dynamic economy are met, there will be bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

Concept of National Unity

Nation: Asira (2017) defined a nation as a group of people who share a common origin, language, history, culture, and government.

Unity: According to Hornby (2010), unity is the state of being one, oneness, a whole, or totality as combining all its parts into one, and the absence of diversity.

National unity: is the process of bringing various people from different cultural and social backgrounds together in a given social context or polity for their collective interest. According to Weiner (1967) in Jude and Okoroafor (2018), states that “national unity which refers specifically to the problems of creating a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows parochial loyalties”. Weiner [1967], avers that “national unity involves the amalgamation of disparate social, economic, religious, ethnic and geographic elements into a single nation-state. Again, Hogan [2006], postulates that national unity involves uniting of formally separates groups into one group with the obliteration of any previous social and cultural group differences as well as reflective and contemplative activity.

Educational policies and National unity

According to Tyokyaa and Odeh (2017), some of the educational policies that were made to promote national unity are:

- i. The Ashby commission 1960, made the first educational policy for Nigeria. This was an outstanding attempt made by the commission toward national unity to balance the north and the south to diffuse the already rising tension over the imbalance in educational opportunities between the south and the north.
- ii. Another recommendation toward national unity was the establishment of national high schools, a university in the north (ABU, Zaria), a university in the west [university of Lagos], and a university in the East (University of Nigeria Nsukka) aiming at uniting the country.
- iii. The curriculum conference in 1969 brought about; National consciousness, nationalism, and national reconstruction. These recommendations were made to foster the country's unity.
- iv. The 1st and 2nd national development plan did not deviate from the Ashby commission's recommendation except for the expansion of education where they were an emphasis on adult education which was aimed at facilitating literacy and soliciting the majority of the citizen to the norms and values of the country thereby fostering national unity.
- v. The third development plan [1978_80] came up with universal primary education as an instrument for national unity.
- vi. The introduction of free and compulsory primary education was the belief that education plays a crucial role in nation-building and was the only way equalization could be realized in the political system hence uniting the nation.
- vii. The policy called for intensive mass literacy nationwide which was on the belief that it facilitates the knowledge and the use of the English language as a common medium of communication thereby reducing the problem of language among the different ethnic groups.
- viii. The recommendation of the Onabamiro implementation committees on the national policy on education for teaching the National Anthem and the recitation of the National Pledge in all primary schools across the country will promote loyalty to the country and enhance the cultivation of the spirit of tolerance among people of a different ethnic group.
- ix. Teaching civic and ethics at post-primary and secondary levels of education was seen as a way of inculcating a sense of responsibility in all youth, citizenship education.

Importance of National Unity

- i. National unity promotes the spirit of oneness and togetherness
- ii. It reduces fear, suspicion, and striving.
- iii. It promotes patriotism and loyalty among citizens.
- iv. National unity enhances speedy economic development and economic growth
- v. National unity promotes peace among different ethnic groups in the country.
- vi. It enables the country to develop a sense of direction and to work towards achieving a unified national goal.

The Role of Education in National Unity

1. Education instills in citizens the consciousness of strength in togetherness.
2. Education shapes people's minds and hearts for its past and presents a cooperative and united Nigerian future.
3. It unites and creates ironic bonds which are strong enough to overcome the various challenges faced by the country.
4. It creates awareness of our responsibilities to instill values and our lives.
5. Education provides us with the knowledge that is very essential for national unity.
6. Education enables us to understand that we have different religions with one goal which is serving God
7. Education has made up understands that we should exercise freedom of worship in schools and public institutions
8. It gives us maturity, understanding, and the required knowledge to perceive the events surrounding us and also to understand what national unity is all about.

Government Programmes Aimed at Promoting National Unity

Nigeria is a pluralist and multi-ethnic nation, and several efforts have been made by the government starting from the colonial era to create systems, institutions, and programs aimed at promoting national unity.

According to Uriah, and Amadi, (2020), some of the programs promoting national unity are;

1. Federalism. The colonial administration 1954 introduced federalism into Nigeria. This was to preserve both unity and stability in a deeply divided nation like Nigeria.
2. The national youth service corps (NYSC). the NYSC was introduced to unite the country. It sought to enhance the interaction among the educated elite scattered in different parts of the country by providing them with the opportunity of living and serving in states other than their state so they could better understand the culture, perhaps the language, and the general lifestyle of the host committees.
3. Federal character principle. The federal character principle aimed to achieve the fair and effective representation of the various components of the federation in the country's, position of power, status, and influence (Ugoh& upper, 2021). It was a goal to accommodate the diverse linguistic, ethnic, religious, and geographic groups in the decision-making of the state.
4. Re-Locating Nigeria's capital to Abuja. Moving the capital from Lagos to Abuja was a unitive policy of the government to further in unite Nigeria. Considering the ethnicity of Nigeria with diverse culture and traditions. Lagos was traditionally belonging to

one of the major ethnic groups (Yoruba), and it was recommended that the capital should be moved to Abuja.

5. Sharing of Revenue. The Formula, which was adopted in sharing the revenue realized by the government, was aimed at addressing violence taking place in the Niger Delta, which is blessed with crude oil and was agitating for resource control. The sharing formula has also considered that the oil-producing states should be allocated up to 15% each.
6. State Creation: The creation of states in 1967 and the land use decree were measures put in place to strengthen Nigeria's unity. Gowon resorted to the creation of states in a bid to keep the nation united. This came as a result of the powers the three regions had and were self-sufficient and almost independent

Challenges Confronting National Unity

Some of the challenges that are confronting the national unity identified by Omisore (2018) are as follows:

- i. The Nigerian come coup d'état (1966). A coup is an overthrow of an existing government, which is an illegal and unconstitutional seizure of power by the military. Chukwuma Kaduna Nzegwu and Emmanuel Ifeajuna claimed 22 lives prominent among them were, Abubakar Tafawa Belewa and Sir Ahmadu Bello, who led the 1966 coup. The northerners have not forgotten this ugly scene and have erroneously perceived it as an Igbo Plot. Since then, Nigeria has the unfortunate records of military coups that saw the emergence of Murtala Mohammed, Buka Suka Dimka, Muhammed Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida, Gideon Orkar, Sani Abacha, among others playing some key roles.
- ii. Nepotism. This is the practice among those with power favoring relatives and friends especially by giving jobs and appointments hence destroying the unity of Nigeria.
- iii. Corruption. This is one of the major viruses that has taken Nigeria back to its present situation which we are facing today. Our leaders are taking our funds to other countries and leaving our country undeveloped and creating disunity.
- iv. Skewed Federal System. The Federal System Practiced in Nigeria today is skewed. A nation full of opportunities for all citizens is now meant only for some particular group of people.
- v. The civil war (1967-970). The war between the Nigerian government and the state of Biafra was a result of the conflict that resulted from political, economic, ethnic, cultural, and religious, tension.
- vi. Lack of Political will. Lack of political will by leaders to do the needful as politicians have hindered the progress of the national unity.
- vii. Religious Problems. The Nigerian constitution has stated that there should be freedom of worship and there should be respect for each other's religion. The lack of sufficient knowledge about different religions and ways of life has made some religions believe they are superior to others. There is a continuous rivalry between the Muslims and Christians in Nigeria hence bringing disunity in the country.
- viii. Excessive Quest for Political Power. The excessive quest for political power among politicians between the Northern and the Southern parts of the country has continued to threaten the unity of Nigeria.

- ix. Terrorism. Various terrorist groups emerged in the northern part of Nigeria preaching jihad and saying no to western education, especially Boko Haram. This has continued to fuel disunity among Nigerians on religious grounds.
- x. The indigenous people of Biafra (I.P.O.B). This group was founded by Nnamdi Kanu, who resurfaced the issue of independence of the indigenous Biafran population from Nigeria, the agitation for operation through
- xi. referendum or plebiscite is based on the marginalization of the Igbos.
- xii. The Niger Delta Militancy. The conflict in the Niger Delta first arose in the early 1990s over the exploitation of the minority ethnic groups in the region, particularly the Ogoni and Ijaw people. That violence has contributed to the energy supply crisis by discouraging foreign investment in the new power generation plant in the region and also contributing to the disunity of the country
- xiii. The Fulani Herdsmen. These are nomads whose occupation is rearing cattle. The clash between the herdsmen and farmers has led some states to deny them entrance to certain areas of their state. This does promote national unity.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

It is indisputable that education fosters unity and endangers development in its facets. It is also indisputable that for these lofty goals to be realized, all the stakeholders, from the policymakers to service providers and beneficiaries must be committed to their duties. The following suggestions are therefore made in an attempt to chart the way forward. They are:

1. Justice. If Nigeria must pursue national unity properly to the end, there should be justice, fairness, and equity. Everybody must be equally treated before the law.
2. Economic unity. Economic inequalities are nominated in our country. No part of the country should be seen as economically and there should be equal distribution of the proceeds from our natural resources.
3. National language. The issue of the national language is critical for national unity. Beyond the English language, conscious attempts should be made to have a national language
4. Accountability by leaders. Political leadership should be accountable for their constituency allowances being distributed by the national assembly for the development of their various constituencies where they cannot account for the funds given to them, they should face the full wrath of the law.
5. Education. Education is critical for national unity. It gives the necessary motivation to citizens and inculcates the consciousness of oneness into citizens thereby promoting unity
6. Corruption has become a virus that must be fought until it is eradicated by punishing those who are involved in such acts. It should be treated as a capital offense.
7. Fair educational policies in various states. The current measures by the federal government to unity are commendable but need to be strengthened and implemented. Various states should be more open-minded in their educational policies. Differential admission and fee-paying policies should be re-examined to promote unity in the country
8. Values and citizenship education. The role of education in the inculcation of values is not in doubt but the modus operandi for these to be realized must be re-examined. Citizenship education should start early in the lives of all people. History, social studies, and civic education should be emphasized in schools.

9. Accountability in education. To ensure unity, and adequate social, economic, and political development of the country, all stakeholders in education industries at all levels must be made accountable for any funds and resources spent on their teachers, administrators, infrastructures and salaries, etc.

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