

# 25

## EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR ADDRESSING NATIONAL ISSUES AND MEASURES OF INTEGRATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY

**EZULIKE CECILIA C.**

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION STUDIES  
FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION PANKSHIN, PLATEAU STATE.

### **Abstract:**

*This paper focused on education as an instruction for addressing national issues and measures of integration for national development. The paper briefly looked at concept of education, nation and problems of integration. It further looked at measures of national integration which stated education as a powerful weapon for national integration. The paper wrote on the organization of curriculum, admission polices in various educational centre, employment of teachers and the general policy which should encourage the Dropagation of national element to ensure the development ofthe nation.*

### **Introduction**

Before the independence, Nigerians were very much united. With this spirit of Unity, the elites agitated for self governance, through various means like newspapers, magazines. Political parties to mention but a few. The independence granted to Nigeria on 1 October,1960, marked the beginning of national problems like rigging of election regionalism and issues of minority. Nigerian cultural values are criticized by Nigerian. Segregation and lack of honesty among Nigerians in government, private offices and in business is a matter of great concern in the realization of National integration which lays in it the key to true development in Nigeria. The popularly slogan "government property is no body's property" is setting Nigerians back ward.

The paper therefore, emphasizes the need for effective education starting from home to institutions of learning as the solutions to the problems of National integration in Nigeria. Hornby (2005), Defines education as "a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools or colleges, to improve knowledge and development skills". Man needs knowledge in order to develop himself and his environment (society). This knowledge could be gotten through education, from the peoples (teachers) that have acquired that knowledge through series of training.

Education starts from the home to the school. The home lays a sound foundation for the child's intellectual development by providing learning materials and making the home environment stimulating. That means when the child comes to the school, he brings with his personality the traditions and culture of his family that child will find it easy to learn in the school.

Adesina (1981) says, "Education determines the character of a nation and the quality of its leaders". The three domains of effective, cognitive and psychomotor of individual is taken into consideration.

National policy on Education states that "Education is seen as an investment for the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen ...at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system"

Education is the process of teaching and learning by which man is trained for the society in which he lives and also to realize his individual potentials which will bring development to the society. That means education is limitless, it has no limits in time or space.

Education should eliminate ignorance, reduce poverty and unhealthy ethnic rivalry, improve the living standards of all citizens, increase personal and national wealth, include positive values and create a sound foundation for National Development and well being (NPE).

Fafunwa (1974) Defines education as the aggregate of all the process by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitude and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the society in which he lives, From the above definitions, development of the society comes through education. So shall the national integration come through education, that means no nation can develop or unite without education.

Man is mentally disciplined through education. That means before he passes through the levels of education, his mind will be well trained and disciplined by the culture of the society through the curriculum. Through education man can adapt or adjust to his environment and to any situation he finds himself, hence the society is not static but dynamic. Through education man is liable to change for good.

Our national heroes (nationalists) were educated, like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and others were educated. That is why they rose and fought for independences of this great nation, Nigeria. If they were not educated, they would not have fought for the independent of our country. The knowledge they had through education made them to be aware of themselves and they succeeded. The quality of a community or nation depends largely upon the kind of education all its citizens receive (Jatau., Pali, Wadak 2004).

Hornby (2005) defines nation as a country considered as a group of people with the same language, culture and history, who live in a particular area under one government: an independent nation. Nigeria is a nation with different tribes and languages. The major tribes in

Nigeria are Hausa, Ibo, Yoruba but under one government. Just like the old National Anthem puts it, "though tribe and tongue may differ, but in brotherhood we stand"... Nigerians are one with one boundary, bordered by North Niger Republic, by the East, Cameroon, by the West Benin Republic and by the South of the Gulf of Guinea. She has an area of 913 073 square kilometers (Uwechue 1991: Ogbonna, Ushie, Lubis, Mustapha and Da Nigeria was colonized by Great Britain and later got her independent on 1 October, (1960). On the 1" October, (2010), she celebrated her golden jubilee at fifty (50) years. Many rulers have ruled this nation, both military and civilian government, twenty nine years under military and twenty one years of civilian rule. In 1960, Nigeria operated under three regions, by 1963, Mid- Western region was created making four regions.

Before 1960, Nigerians were united, it was that unity that made the elites to agitate for independent (self governance) politically economically and socially but after the independence, the story changed. There had been a lot of evils in the society like Coup upon coup, rigging of election, ethnicism, poverty, religious intolerance, the bomb blast on the 1" October, 2010 (Golden Jubilee) and so on But through education all these evils will end. If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be. Enlighten the people generally and tyranny and oppressions of body and mind will vanish like evil spirit at dawn of day (Iskefianyi 1964 and Jatau etal (2004).

### **Problems of National Integration**

Hornby (2005) defines integration as "the act or process of combining two or more things so that they work together". The aim is to promote closer economic integration. It is also the act or process of mixing people who have previously been separated, usually because of colour, race, religion etc. A nation like Nigeria is separated as a result of differences in the society and religion, regionalism etc, which education could unite the nation. With the ceaseless struggles of nationalists, Nigerian became independent in 1960. Since then, attempts have been made by succeeding governments to build a united, egalitarian and dynamic society despite the cultural, economic and religious differences of the people yet, problems of national unity and integration surface in different ways. Some of the problems of national integration according to Ogbonna (2004) and Chaube and Chaube (2002) include:

- **Bribery and Corruption:** - These have manifested their ugly heads in the country through economic mismanagement, indiscipline, ethnicism and dictatorship. It is an open secret that some highly placed government officials normally convert the national coffers to their personal use. Kick back is not a strange vocabulary in the award of contracts. Some officers openly demand for bribe (kola); these have plunged the nation into debt and untold hardship.
- **Political parties:** - Political parties strive to form government at the centre or in some states. No political party appears to sincerely keep national interest at heart. Each party

tries to maintain its hold on some particular issues, but none appears to be thinking for the nation. It is true that in a democracy, they have to be a number of political parties but crafty diplomacy of letting down some party creates a bad blood and it can never have a salutary impact on the nation as a whole.

- **National symbols are not respected by many Nigerian:** While some enlightened Nigerian cannot decide the National Anthem. Some refuse to respect the anthem when sung. Moreso, in some places, tattered flags are hoisted. Election no longer serve the useful purpose of providing an opportunity for a choice of government. This is because those in power often rig or annul election to ensure its continued stay in government. Example of annulment is June 12 election of Chief M. K.O. Abiola in 1993.
- **State formations:** From the administrative point of view Nigeria is divided into various states, after they struggled for independence. Nigerian government then saw it as necessary for the formation of new states. These new states were formed based on languages, geographical and interest within ethnic groups. After the creation of new states, people within these new states started antagonizing among each other. Some states, people within these new states started antagonizing among each other. People wanted more persons from their regions to get government jobs not minding whether they are qualified or not. This position can never be helpful for national integration and of the rebranding Nigerian project.
- **The use of derogatory terms:** In describing particular ethnic group drives Nigerian apart rather than uniting and integrating them. The Hausas for example call the Ibo's "Nyamiri" while the Igbo's call the Hausas "Onya Hausa". The Yoruba's call the Hausas "Gambari" etc.
- **Different Languages:** - In Nigeria many languages are spoken by the people. There are some people in the country who do not like the language spoken by some people. This is because the tribes in Nigeria existed as separate independent nations before they were colonized and amalgamated in 1914. The British that colonized Nigeria used English as official language. When Nigeria got her independent, she adopted English as official language. Because we are not united that is why we cannot adopt any Nigerian language as an official language.
- **Colonial misrule:** - The colonial masters with his divide and rule system sowed a seed of discord in Nigeria by dividing the country into regions. Most Nigerians always fall back to their regions each time there is a national crisis.
- **The problem of ceaseless coups in Nigeria political development:** The military dominated the political scene at the expense of a popular government. Since the task of the military is far from political administration become difficult for it to map out strategies that can foster the much desired national unity.

- **Our culture is neglected by the whites, especially during the colonial era:**

They looked at Nigeria culture as primitive and their own culture as superior. Nigerian are also neglecting her own culture even in the era of independent. This was as a result of the indiscriminate importation of western culture into Nigeria through the media (particularly the television) and other means has taken the country backward. Programs on the television promote the political, economic, social and scientific superiority of the western world. This sensitizes us to perpetual mental slavery that the much needed National understanding can hardly be achieved.

- **Religious intolerance:** Religion is defined as the belief in the existence of a god or gods and the activities that are connected with the worship of them (Hornby 2005). By the proclamation of Nigeria as a secular state in the constitution and the guaranteeing of the freedom of worship by the same document, people are supposed to go about religious activities unmolested but sometimes religious disturbances are witnessed, For instance, the cases of Christian / Muslims clashes in Tafawa Balewa in Bauchi state, Zaria in Kaduna state, that of Boko Haram. Jos. Plateau state crises of 2001 up to early 2012 is fresh in our memory. Communal clashes are common thing in Nigeria, clashes between Hausa and Ketaf in Zongo Ketaf Yoruba vs Yoruba in Modakeke, the Urhobo/tsekiri in Delta state, the Hausa vs Yoruba clashes in Kano and Shagamu are still fresh. In situation like this, the pride of unity in diversity evaporates in thin air. The two religions which suppose to bring Nigerians together are tearing us apart.
- **Lack of proper education:** - Lack of awareness or illiteracy has caused many Nigerian to live as barbarians and uncultured fellows, exhibiting animalistic behaviors towards their brothers, neighbors or fellow citizens of Nigeria. The existing policy on education is very good in content but the implementation is poor. Nigeria has good policy makers. But implementation is lacking.
- **Lack of able leadership:** - For national integration able leadership is necessary irrespective of tribe or religion, because it is an able leader who can wipe off the divisive forces and bring the people on the right track. We lack skilful leaders. Now there are very few leaders who are acceptable to the entire country, but because they do not belong to the leading party in the country, or they belong to a particular tribe or religion that is not accepted by a particular group who claim to be "all in all" in this nation such people may not be elected. Most leaders in Nigeria today think of their own interest and not for the nation's interest. These leaders will always be harmful to national integration.
- **Economic inequalities:** Inequalities are placing obstacles in our national integration. In this country, there are some people who can not afford a square meal in a day, while some have much money that they do not know what to do with it. That is the reason kidnapping

is on increase in Nigeria. Most of the people that are victims or affected are the rich. Many graduates are on every corner of this nation, no job from the government, no new industries that can employ these graduates, many students in the universities have no hope of any job after graduation. Because of these problems of unemployment some of these youths have devised a means of taking care of themselves in a wrong way.

### **Measures of national integration through education**

Education has always been one of man's important activities: Man could not carry on government, family life, religion or earn a living without some form of education, be it formal or informal education (Jatau, Poli, Wadak 2004): The first measure is honesty: if every average Nigerian can be honest in his every day activity, the issue of bribery and corruption will be reduced. A child should be taught the importance of honesty right from home to all levels of institutions of learning, thus, they are leaders of tomorrow. Proverbs 22: 15 says "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child: but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him". That "rod" is education: through education the foolishness and other evils shall be driven out from him (the child). In support of the above, Proverbs 22:6 says "train up a child in the way he shall go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it". If a child is well trained he will not depart from the good training. He will not go for what will enrich him alone but he will go for the things that will develop the country he finds himself. Through education, the child will learn how to embrace others, irrespective of the tribe or religion. Education will help one to make a rightful choice especially during election and cannot be deceived by any politician.

National symbols should be taught compulsorily in our schools. So that everybody will be aware of the meaning and the importance of the national symbols to national integration. National pledge states that, we should be faithful, loyal and honest., if we should abide by these words, Nigeria will be the best place or country to live in.

Through education, we will learn how to be orderly, also our administrative posts will be occupied by merits and not by whom you know or where you come from. Religious tolerance should be taught in all levels of institutions of learning so that Nigerians will tolerate and appreciate one another's religion and not to condemn any religion. These two religions are all about the supremacy of the Almighty God and should not bring disunity; rather it should be a unifying force.

As we are "one Nigeria", the use of derogatory term should be avoided. Institution of learning should emphasize much on appreciation of all Nigeria cultures, and not to criticize any of the cultures. It should be treated well in the schools so that the richness of our culture will be seen or understood by students, which will help them to do away with European cultures. Inter-marriages should be encouraged through education; it will also enhance our culture.

Awareness should be created among our military men. Their duty is to defend (security) the nation and not to take over government. The importance of civilian rule in democratic

dispensation should be emphasized in the schools system, so that those youths that may join Nigerian Army will avoid coups, this is one of the greatest problems Nigeria have. The country celebrated fifty (50) years of independence, rule by the military for twenty nine (29) years and a civilian government for twenty one (21) years, the very day of her 50<sup>th</sup> year of anniversary was a bomb explosion that took away many lives and left many injured. Through sound education all these evils will stop or at least be reduced. Leadership education should be treated well in all levels of education, so that when the leader emerges tomorrow he or she might have already been away of his duties or how to handle situations and govern well.

### **Conclusion:**

Education plays a crucial role in national integration as it serves as a powerful tool for unifying diverse communities. The organization of curricula, admission processes, establishment of educational institutions, and appointment of teachers should all align with a national policy that fosters unity. Encouraging inter-state marriages can further strengthen bonds among people, creating a sense of togetherness.

Parents, teachers, and religious institutions should focus on instilling national values rather than emphasizing religious, tribal, or class distinctions. Honesty and moral teachings should be prioritized both at home and in schools to guide children towards ethical behavior and national unity.

### **Recommendations**

1. **Education as a Motivator**
  - Education provides children with the necessary motivation for national integration. Families and communities, as primary social institutions, must take the responsibility of nurturing and educating children seriously.
2. **Honesty in Parenting and Teaching**
  - Parents and teachers should be honest and sincere in their dealings so that children can learn and emulate good values.
3. **Effective Policy Implementation**
  - The government should not only formulate policies but also ensure their effective implementation. While policies on education and national integration are well-structured, the major challenge lies in execution.
4. **Encouraging Inter-State Marriages**
  - Parents and communities should support inter-state marriages as a means of cultural integration. Children should have the freedom to choose their partners without external imposition.
5. **Job Creation**
  - The government should establish more industries to create job opportunities for the growing youth population. Gainful employment will reduce crime rates and promote social stability.

**6. Freedom of Worship**

- Awareness should be raised about the importance of freedom of worship, ensuring that people can practice their religion without discrimination.

**7. Welfare Consideration by Leaders**

- Leaders should prioritize the welfare of the masses, making policies that improve the quality of life for all citizens.

**8. Parental Responsibility**

- Parents should invest in their children's education to equip them with skills for a productive future. Unemployment can lead to social vices, so ensuring children receive quality education will help them find meaningful engagement after school.

By implementing these recommendations, education can be harnessed as a powerful force for promoting national unity and social cohesion.

## REFERENCES

- Adesina, S. (1981). Introduction to Educational Planning. Ife: University Press Limited.
- Chaube S. O. & Chaube, A. (1994): Foundations of Education, Second Revised Edition, Vikas Publishing House PVT Ltd.
- Fafunwa, A B. (1974): History of Education in Nigeria. George Allen & Unwin.
- Holy Bible (Authorized KIV): Comerstone Bible Publishers. Nershville,
- Hormby. A. (2005): Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary. Oxford University Press.
- Longman Dicionary of Contemporary English (2005): Harlow: Pearson Publications Ltd.
- Jatau, M.N, N. Pali & Wadak YI. (2004): Journal Education Issues Vol. 2. Matchers Publishing
- National Policy on Education, (2004): NERD C PRESS: Yaba Lagos.
- ewCaxton Encvelope dia, (1997): London: The Caxton Publishing Company Ltd.
- Ogbonna (2004): Foundations of Primary ducation Studies Vol. 3. WAIS Printing Press.