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Review

Cultural pluralism, reconstructive education and nation building in Nigeria

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This paper examines cultural pluralism, reconstructive education and nation building in Nigeria. The objective is to present the Nigeria case where cultural diversity and differences play major role in the life of the people. Thus, the paper highlights the Nigeria Federation as being hobbled by centrifugal tendencies and activities based on her ethnic grouping and consciousness. In this direction, it provides the problems and also addresses the problem of cultural pluralism that would ensure unity within diversity for a strong, united, virile and democratic society in Nigeria. The paper suggests the way forward that would ensure social integration which is crucial for peace and the development of people and societies in Nigeria. It concludes that to promote national integration, peace and social justice in Nigeria would require the commonly yielding values that hold Nigeria together as a nation. And this is Nigeria rating system expressed in a symbolic way. It recommends civic or reconstructive education to promote the much needed values for nation building which would require a global initiative, and to be promoted by the United Nations under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (U.N.E.S.C.O). This would help address the problems of pan Nigeria values.

Key words: Cultural – pluralism, reconstructive education, nation building.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a heterogeneous society with ethnic pluralism that is rooted in diverse cultures. There are many differrent languages such as Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Gbagi, Tiv, Idoma, Nupe, Egbira, Kanuri, Fulfude, Edo, Ijaw, Efik, Ibibio and so on, to be used as yardstick for determining the variability of Nigeria culture. Each of the ethnic groups in Nigeria has language as its element, and as in the views of Tiamiyu (1999) with reference to Kuper (1971), they are self perpetuating biological groups, with identifiable interactive membership, value system, normative behaviour and a particular part of the state territory. Otite (1990) identified 374 ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Reconstructive education as used in this paper is the process in which Nigerians face response to the challenges of working together to build a stronger nation of unity within diversity. Thus, the paper gives account of the efforts made to address the problems of cultural pluralism that should ensure Nigeria unity. The emphasis is on the processes used to develop programmes that our children understand and from which they would learn to value the differences that constitute Pan-Nigeria values. These issues are presented in the direction of their implication for national integration and nation building in post- independence Nigeria.

Historically, Nigeria was a creation of British colonial power which became a geo –political entity in 1914, when the Northern and Southern protectorates were

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amalgamated. From inception, Nigeria was heavily divided along ethnic lines. The Hausa – Fulani being a dominant group in the North, the Yoruba ethnic group dominated the West and the Igbos dominated the Eastern part of Nigeria. Tribal loyalties, Islamic and Christian religious faith has had a great impact on the social life of various ethnic groups in Nigeria. These have implication for national unity after Nigeria's independence in 1960. Also, the difference that existed between the North and the South in terms of economic resources and opportunities provided the platform for geo-political and economic rivalry soon after independence. This is because the Southern part of Nigeria had the advantage of better economic development because of its enormous natural resources and access to international water ways. These factors exposed the region to better economic, social and educational growth compared to the Northern part of the country.

Education for nation building is a design to improve character and service delivery of teachers, learners and the citizenry. It involves the processes for building and sustaining human relationship by assessing, anticipating and stating the implied needs of the populace. Its essence is quality education for quality assurance towards nation building. In retrospect, UNESCO (2000) stated type of education as;

1. Education that supports a right based approach to all educational endeavours, as a human right and must support all of the human rights.
2. Education that is identified as learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and with others, and learning to see the learner as an individual, a family member, community member and a global citizen who should be educated to create individual competition in all the four roles.
3. Education that upholds and supports the ideals of a sustainable world, which is a world that is just, equitable, peaceful and a world in which individuals come to the environment so as to contribute to intergenerational equity.
4. Education that builds knowledge, perspective, attitudes and values that provide the tools to transform current societies to be more sustainable.

Thus, in this paper 'Nation building' simply means uniting or bringing together, that is, people, possessing diverse cultures, languages, religion and belief systems into one which eschews parochial and subordinate loyalties and sentiments to the ethnic groups. This should make Nigerians to perceive self, first and foremost, as a Nigerian, before identifying with his or her ethnic group. National integration for Nigeria should thus, promotes systems that would contribute to the preservation, promotion and the education of Nigerians (young and old), the values of their cultural variability. But, how can

they be achieved in the Nigeria case?

Social and national integration: The Nigeria case

Social integration is a requirement that is of basic necessities to all societies in Nigeria. Merton (1957), Foster (1970) and Banks (1979) opined that social inte-gration should be pre-occupied with social values that bring about cultural homogeneity of traditional societies (such as that of Nigeria). Thus, it should enhance the production and maintenance of social cohesion and unity of people. This means the progress which is base on the transfer of man's loyalty in his society to voluntary group using intellectual and moral association as a criterion for social integration and unity of cooperate societies (Murray, 1987).

Nigerian politicians, such as Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe (1904-1996) used this kind of association to form the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (N.C.N.C) as a strong national political party in Nigeria's 1st Republic (1960 - 1965). In Nigeria, educational institutions as well as political parties have been used as a base line for cultivating the values and norms which are required for social integration. Thus in the case of Nigeria, like that of other African states social integration has been used as a genuine cooperative spirit to develop societies (Foster, 1970). Like Duverger (1976) posited, there is no social integration without a development of social solidarities. He explained integration as, the process of uniting a society which tends to make it harmonious, where harmonious society is the elimination of the antagonism dividing it, and the struggle which threatens to tear it apart as an integrated community.

In this context, political executives or political parties ensure that the diverse groups in the society have common political value, while Social integration, looks up to political, and economic, cultural and educational integration of the various ethnic nationalities. Nigeria has addressed most of her cultural pluralistic problems through the use of these processes.

Does cultural pluralism hinder national integration and nation building in Nigeria?

The simple answer is yes; because the most difficult task Nigeria faces as a nation since independence is the task of processing national pluralism for national integration. The efforts to build one indivisible nation from the several ethnic nationalities have constituted problems as well. Some of the problems that emerged are sometimes not anticipated. They challenge the context to which cultural pluralism is directed for national integration after independence. Most of the problems have mal-integrative elements and still persist. They constitute a clog in the wheel

of national progress and development. They infest social solidarity and damage economic and social development. Thus:

Ethno-Politico-Religious sentiments are widespread in Nigeria. These, at times, end up in the disruption of peace and order resulting into loss of innocent lives and destruction of properties. There have been incidences of such cases in Kano, Bauchi, Jos, Maiduguri, Aba, Zango-Kataf. The incessant incidents of mayhem and violence in Jos, Maiduguri, Kaduna and other parts of Nigeria have been linked to politico-ethnic problem. However, religions have been employed to ginger a National support to justify incidences leading to violence in Nigeria. It is in this respect that the Arch Bishop of Abuja has condemned the violence in Jos, not as religious but as due to social, economic, tribal and cultural differences (The Nation, March 12th 2010). The Nigerian Senate also said it cannot be a religious problem (Network Senate News, 15th March, 2010).

Added to this, is tribal loyalty and affiliation that have become a way of life of Nigerians especially when it relates to political power that dictates the economic wellbeing of the people. This sometimes translates into corrupt political practices as often witnessed in the conduct of elections in Nigeria. The political leadership is usually accused of appointing people that can help influence their chances of winning elections to head and administer the affairs of the Independent National Electoral Commission (I.N.E.C)- a body charged with conducting election to political offices in Nigeria.

The same scenario goes with the judicial system in Nigeria. Where the organs that is supposed to be the moral umpire of it citizens often fails in its responsibilities of upholding justice and when they uphold justice such is often delayed. Thus, the judiciary is ineffective to check abuses in the society, more so that the rate of corruption within the judiciary itself creates doubts about its integrity. Public and media comments on Nigeria judiciary is at best not encouraging as there have been complaints and reports of high degree of corruption, favouritism, chauvinism and misapplication of justice based on tribal, religious and geo-political affiliation of Nigerian judges (*The Nation, Thursday, July, 17, 2012*). To make matters worse, Nigeria, though rich in mineral, natural and human resources is still a poor country and rated as the 43th poorest nation in the world (Wikipedia, 2007, 2012). Her poverty has been attributed to misappropriation of public funds, lack of efficient planning and control of Nigeria economic resources. The rate of national unemployment is high at 24% (National Bureau of Statistic, 2012). These are attributes that breed idleness among Nigeria youths leading to the creation of anti-social vices such as theft, armed robbery, thurgery and so on, prevalent in the Nigeria society. These are problems that urgently need to

be addressed in the efforts to build a united, indivisible and virile nation.

The Boko Haram (Western Education is a sin) saga has equally become a thorn in the flesh of Nigerians. The Nigerian Government's inability to curtail the overzealous Islamic radical and faceless militant group has left the Nigerian nation on the brinks of being called a 'Terrorist State'. Some fanatical elements have used religious diffe-rences to cause troubles that harmed innocent citizens as was the case in Kano, Bauchi and Maiduguri and other parts of the country. Kidnapping is rampant especially in Delta region of Nigeria. The political leadership has been unable to adequately curtail the problems.

Further, every Nigerian is conscious of his origin, place of birth and language spoken. Thus, most problems and crisis are viewed and addressed in relation to these concepts. These are psychic that constitutes great pro-blems for Nigeria as a nation. Also, Nigeria educational curriculum has failed to address these problems. Thus, there has not been a desired consciousness that would lead us to a strong and united democratic society has contained in our National Constitution (1999).

From the foregoing, it could rightly be said, that cultural pluralism has caused many problems in the polity and lives of Nigerian people. Many people are aware of its implications and consequences for Nigeria as a nation state. The crucial question that arises is, 'what are the mechanisms and system approach at and after independence to redress cultural pluralism for nation building in Nigeria?'

RECONSTRUCTIVE EDUCATION FOR NATION BUILDING: THE NIGERIA EXPERIENCE

After independence, the desire to achieve genuine 'Nationhood' became a matter of concern, since unity is a sin-qua-non to peace, progress and development. In the struggle for national development, there emerged ethno-political rivalries, attributed to social, economic and political gains to be reaped at the national level. This would require political actors to fight for the regional economic parity. But fighting one another will not neces-sarily result in the resolution of the problems identified about every group and the Nigerian Nation. Therefore, in order to redress and address the parlous situation, some epochal policies were initiated at independence and after independence. These policies ushered in new reforms towards National and Social solidarity. Some of these policies are contained in our National philosophy, National policy on education (NPE, 2004) and in the Nigerian Constitution (1999).

Lawal (2008), summarised that, the overall philosophy of Nigeria is to:

1. Live in unity and harmony as one indivisible,

2. undissolvable, democratic Nation founded through and on the principle of freedom and justice and
3. Promote the inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding.

He opined that these two statements cover essentially the realm of nationalism. This would require policy formulation, planning, implementation and evaluation. The framework to achieve the goals of nation building lies in socialization or educational policies and political engineering that would be guided by constitutional provision. The question would thus be, how to source, store, apply and evaluate the acquired information for the purpose of effective intra and inter cultural harmony and solidarity which would make national integration work in Nigeria. It is on the strength of this background, that the following appraisal is drawn.

But in Nigeria, to ensure national solidarity, there exists a seeming paradox, since each local or geo-political entity manifests its culture in a unique way. The cultural manifestations fill and determine their course of lives and conscious thoughts. As Herskovits (1955) puts it, culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, moral, laws, custom and any other capabilities and habit acquired by man as a member of a society. It would require a system approach to reposition Nigerians towards nation building based on self identity as to who is a Nigerian (that is the creation of national consciousness and harmonious co-existence regardless of cultural variability of the Nigerian people). As Lawal (2008) aptly observed, after independence inter-ethnic rivalry and struggle for political domination worsened and it later snowballed into internecine war. If it was so, what should be done to ensure national integration among Nigerians?

Approaches toward ensuring national integration among Nigerians at and after Independence (1960)

At independence, Tiamiyu (1999) highlighted some system approaches towards cohesive National integration in Nigeria. He listed a host of good indicators as means towards eventual evolution of cohesive National unity. These include the following symbols of Nigerian Nationhood:

1. The Nigeria Coat of Arms (1960)
2. The National Flag (1960)
3. The National Pledge (1970) after Nigerian civil war
4. The National Anthem (1960)
5. The Nigerian Currencies (1960), modified in 1978

The main import of these indicators is to create unity among Nigerian diverse ethnic nationalities and to put faith in her continued existence and the well-being of every Nigerian. Expectedly, the end result would be peace and progress in the country. Thus, the National flag and the Nigerian other National symbols have become the symbols of sovereign authority at independence. They represent Nigeria National pride and sovereignty. So also, the National pledge is recited to reinforce Nigerian's commitment to duty and service. Nigerians are required to serve with strength, defend National unity, and be faithful, loyal and honest in the course of their civic responsibilities.

The National Anthem on the other hand is a clarion call to National duty, which commands the respect and commitment of Nigerian citizens. It is a projection for the inculcation of Honesty, Loyalty, Service, Sacrifice and Good leadership which are considered desirable and important for bridging cultural pluralism for Nation building. It appeals to Nigerian conscience on the need to respect and protect the course for which Nigeria's past heroes have died.

Not only the National symbols have been used to inculcate National integration, but also Nigeria's educational, political, economic, cultural and social policies have been reframed to foster National unity and integration after independence. Some of the educational policies include:

1. The quota system adopted for admission of young Nigerians into Institutions of learning to address educational gap or inequality across Nigeria.
2. The encouragement of the use of Mother-Tongue and Lingua Franca to foster understanding and National integration (Olajide, 2008; Bangbose, 1999).
3. The students' exchange programme to the various educational institutions across Nigeria, to build students' national consciousness towards national unity.
4. The National Youth Service Corp Scheme (NYSC), where young Nigerian graduates are sent to all states of the Federation to foster co-operation and understanding among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria.
5. The establishment of Unity Schools to create an atmosphere for young Nigerians to interact, regardless of ethnic or religious differences (Ijaya and Jekayinfa, 2008).
6. The curriculum development to educate young Nigerians on wide range information about Nigeria and her people.
7. The legislative provisions, where government deliberately controls the type and nature of education that is desirable for the country and relevant for National unity and development.
8. The nationalisation of Nigerian universities and the Federal Government's assumption of full responsibility in the financing of Higher Education which was on the concurrent legislative list. The objective is to breed high level individuals who would be conscious and committed to National unity.
9. The policy on equity to access educational and

10. developmental opportunities; example, the creation of Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) in the interest of equity in educational opportunities in Nigeria.

Political policies designed towards ensuring national integration among Nigerians include:

1. The use of revenue formula for national integration of the military era and of the subsequent civilian regimes in Nigeria.
2. The secularization of religion which permits freedom of worship enshrined in our Constitution (1999).
3. The framework of power sharing which follows constitutional provision or political arrangement, creating room for each geo-political zone to present the president for the country.

There were also enlightens policies and these include:

1. The use of Information, Communication and Technology in sensitising Nigerians towards National integration. The use of paid advert in the dailies, visual, audio, and audio-visual communication systems, computers, internet, wireless systems etc has helped to transmit information which promotes national unity in Nigeria in recent times.
2. The organising of conferences, workshops, lectures, seminars, campaigns and organised movements in academic and social institutions has been used as strategies to promote national integration, peace and cooperation among the various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

It is hoped that relevant component of the national policy on education could foster the desired national unity; bring progress, increase nationalism and patriotism among Nigerians. It would be expected that Nigerian culture should be projected through the use of relevant educational curriculum in our schools as well. The example is the Mother-Tongue education with emphasis on Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba, which have been marked as national languages for this purpose (NPE, 2004).

Again, the process of balancing political power or the distribution of power in Nigeria has always created problems. It is capable of causing disintegration in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria. In Nigeria, the framework for power sharing follows constitutional or political arrangement. This is with the view of averting monopolisation of political power by single dominant interest groups. Rotational principle has also been used where geo-political zones have been created for elective and appointed posts. Nigeria thus, has six geo-political zones (North-West, North-East, North-Central, South – South,

and South-West). These zones are designed to solve the problems of mal-integration which often constitutes problems in Nigeria. Even with this political provision, there have been problems of political mal-integration. There have been problems of unbalanced political power, in states where the distribution of ethnic population data is lopsided; example, in Benue State where the Idomas feel that the Tivs, a more dominant ethnic group, have persistently refused them political power for the seat of the State Governor. Similar examples abound across the country and there have been agitations to redress it.

Also, the Federal Government of Nigeria has also addressed issues of mal-integration by setting up various revenue allocation committees, charged with responsibility of recommending revenue sharing formula. The examples of such Committees after independence are Binns (1994), Aboyade (1977) and Dina (1968) committees. At present, the Federal Government has a revenue sharing formula (acceptable to all stakeholders) to avert cases that would lead to mal-integration.

Civic Education to install national identity, awareness and integration has been used through school curriculum in our educational institutions. Also, political education has been used as a tool for national integration. These have been tackled through adoption and the use of multi-cultural forms of education that capture the Nigeria cultural environment. The Nigeria educational policy and curriculum content, is thus, to knit the diverse cultural differences linguistically, culturally, socially and politically. For example, the Nigerian language policy is designed to bind people who speak different languages.

Other crucial issues in Nigeria that are relevant to the concept of this paper are Sections 10,11, 15(2) and 16(2), of Nigeria Constitution (1999), which prohibit discrimination on the grounds of State of Origin, Sex, Status, Ethnic or linguistic association. Sections 11(13) (a & b) and 16(3), of the Nigerian Constitution deals with free mobility of people and rights for every Nigerian. All these are meant to address issues of national integration.

Further, there have been efforts at Mobilisation for Economic Recovery, Social Justice and Self Reliance (MANSER) established through Decree No. 37 of 1987 during General Babagida's rule. This was designed to promote new set of attitudes and culture for the attainment of goals and objectives of the Nigerian state. It is to ensure the co-operate unity of the Nigerian Nation.

Thus this study has chosen examples from a limited number of policies used in post Independence Nigeria to address issues which relate to Cultural pluralism and National Integration because of their unique dimension to the cooperate existence of Nigeria as a Nation State. However, with all the policies adopted, there exists elements of mal-integrative forces that are capable of eroding the cooperate existence of Nigeria as one indivisible Nation. Therefore, the question that remains to be addressed is: What should be the way forward for

creating a better Nigerians?

The way forward

The quest to create a united, free and democratic society from Nigeria diverse cultural terrain would require:

1. A framework for promoting the very sensitive issues that often leads to problems and conflicts among Nigerians. This should include developing the mechanism to address the problems of religious differences, ethnicism, political power sharing, and allocation of economic resources and so on.

2. Establishment of 'Co-Associational democracy' as advocated by Liphard and highlighted in Olaniyi (1999). This should require leaders of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria to work together and solve Nigerian problems. This kind of association should be mindful of the political elites who use primordial public than civil public for their self centred political and economic gains. The lingering crisis in Jos, Maiduguri, Kaduna and Damaturu which has been largely condemned is the point of reference in this regard.

3. Having a leader who could put a lid on the paroxysms of rage across the country and if the country is not to be dismembered there should be a courageous leader to execute the required change toward National unity. General Yakubu Gowon has said, that he had to use force to preserve the unity of the Nation (The Nation, Tuesday, March 9th, 2010)

4. Educational curriculum development towards effective means of what would bring about National integration should be developed across all tiers of our educational systems. The school syllabuses, instructional materials such as textbooks and the teaching methods, should be made effective and efficient to meet the challenges of National unity, integration, economic, political and socio-cultural development.

5. Adequate plan, implementation and evaluation systems based on Nigeria's National political philosophy. The objective would be to create National consciousness and unity.

6. Issues that lead to mal-integration should be handled with formal and informal mechanisms, especially through the use of 'third party' or 'neutral interest group', who would negotiate with the party at dispute. In this way, Nigeria can harness the values of her cultural pluralism, by bringing together the values of her cultural norms for National interest.

7. Enlightenment programmes on the need for National integration in our Institutions of learning, Homes, Churches, Mosques, Communities, Local, State and National Assemblies, to educate and sensitise Nigerians on the need for National unity. The use of Information, Communication and Technology (I.C.T) system as presently

being used in the country is a commendable effort.

8. Encouragement of inter-tribal marriages for example, The National Youth Service Corp Scheme should be force-exposé for our young Nigerians to interact with other ethnics groups thereby promoting intertribal marriages. This would strengthen relationship among diverse ethnic group in Nigeria.

9. Encouragement of exchange visit by traditional rulers, to enhance peaceful socio-cultural harmonious relationship that would bring about unity. The Sultan of Sokoto is noted for such missions as reported in our Dailies. Also, the Shehu of Borno (February, 2010) undertook a similar visit to Alake of Egba land in South West Nigeria. These would definitely have positive National integrative effects.

10. Organising inter and intra cultural activities at the Local, State and National levels to promote the values of Nigerian culture; example, cultural festivals and carnivals across the country would help process national integration and nationhood

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The quest for nation building should be based on terms of Nigeria cultural rating systems, which are the commonly yielded values that hold Nigerians together. Like Giddens (2006) stated, this should be expressed in symbolic ways, like the food we eat, the cloth we wear, the language we speak, norms and values that would be relevant to promoting National integration, peace and social justices in Nigeria.

To attain the goal of achieving unity within diversity, there is need for a well planned and modified educational programmes and socialisation process for Nigerian, to address the problems that arise as a result of cultural differences in Nigeria. This should be in the light of how they influence the various cultures, individuals and Nigerians in general. There should be the promotion of social justice and equity, through accommodation and deliberate use of education for cultural, political, social and economic development of every society and the well being of individuals in Nigeria. Education in Nigeria should integrate and inculcate the norms and values of the various cultural groups, because education that is based on the functions of cultural matrix in which it operates, leads to the creation of consciousness required for social integration and national unity. Unity within diversity is a necessary criterion for peace and the development of people, societies, nations and the world at large. Nigeria education policies and programmes should be the one that children must be made to understand and from which they would learn the values of the differences in our cultures. In this respect, the paper suggests a global initiative toward the development of citizenship education programme not only for pan-Nigeria values but also universal values. A world wide

initiative that would support and facilitate the inculcation of universal norms and values of the various cultural groups across the globe and leading to universal unity within diversity is recommended. This kind of initiative as recommended should be promoted by the United Nations under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (U.N.E.S.C.O). This would help address the problems of pan Nigeria values to bring about social integration and national unity.

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