



## **Education and National Integration: Challenges and Prospects**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Since the inception of the Nigerian nation, Nigerian governments, past and present, have made serious efforts to propagate policies and programmes that are geared towards national integration. Despite such well-intended and unity-oriented programmes and policies, Nigeria's unity has continued to be plagued and threatened by socio-cultural, religious and political dichotomies. Unless efforts are made to checkmate these divisive tendencies towards national integration, the long expected and loudly proclaimed oneness and indivisibility of Nigeria will remain questionable. This paper, predicated against the backdrop of structural functionalism, advocates the necessity for national integration and the role education plays in dealing with factors that are militating against the much desired national unity in Nigeria. Suggestions are made on how Nigeria can achieve national integration. This paper believes that achieving national integration is contingent on jumping the hurdles of ethnicity, corruption, a narcissistic political leadership, weak institutions and others. It concludes that to claim the victory for an integrated Nigeria, the people must through education lead the vanguard of change and that for the continued existence of Nigeria to be guaranteed probably for another centennial, consensual agreement must be reached by its diverse ethnic nationalities.

**Keywords:** Education; Nation; National Integration; Challenges and Prospects.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Many nations of the world are made up of different tribes, ethnic groups and cultures. Nigeria as one of them is a nation with diverse ethnic groups and cultures. It is made up of over three hundred (300) tribes which includes; Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, Ijaw, Kanuri, Annang, Tiv, Ibibio, Etsako, Efik, etc. It has well over five hundred and twenty seven (527) languages and one thousand, one hundred and fifty (1150) dialects (Abraham 2017). Before the amalgamation of 1914, Nigeria had three main regions; the Hausas, the Igbos and the Yorubas which operated separately. Later, it was divided into two; the Northern and the Southern protectorates. But in 1914, after the naming of Nigeria, Sir Lord Lugard saw the need for the merging of the two protectorates into a single colony for ease of administration. Sir Lord Lugard's action connotes integration. This happens to be the major problem that the present Nigerian nation is facing today. Many ethnic groups have made and are still making efforts to secede due to perceived marginalization and uneven distribution of resources/opportunities.

But Nigeria has been making efforts to make sure that she stands as an indivisible nation. She has employed several tools for her unity. One of her most viable tools is "EDUCATION". Education, which is the bedrock of human existence, plays a vital role in the integration of a nation, hence, national integration.

## CONCEPTUAL VIEWS

### EDUCATION

According to Nwagwu (2017), education is defined as the process by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, skills, and attitudes in its cultural setting and heritage in order to foster and guarantee its survival. Again, John Milton cited in Ezewu (2013), asserts that “education is that which prepares a man to perform justly, skillfully and magnanimously all the offices either at war or in peace”.

According to Okafor (2014), education is defined as a process of acculturation through which the individual is helped to attain the development of his potentials and their maximum activation when necessary according to right reason and to achieve thereby his perfect self-fulfillment. In the same vein, Chauhan (2009), defines education as “the shaping of behavior or modification of behaviors of the individual for adequate adjustment in the society.

Connor (1957) cited in Uriah (2019), defined education as the process by which society through schools, colleges, universities and other institutions deliberately transmits its cultural heritage, its accumulated knowledge, values and skills from generation to generation.

According to Mbakwem (2015), education is believed to be a change in behavior, the change can be either overt-open or covert-hidden, it can be negative or positive depending on the quality of the experience provided and on the person (teacher) who provides that educative experience. To Castle cited in Uriah (2019), education is what happens to us from the day we are born to the day we die. Therefore, education is a life-long endeavor. Jeffrey cited in Ezewu (2013), views education as the community’s means of nurturing personal growth. To Fafunwa (2010), Education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develop the abilities, attitude and other forms of behaviors that are positive values to the society in which he lives. Relatedly, Plato cited in Uriah (2019), sees education as that training which is given by suitable habits to the first instinct of virtue in children when pleasure and pain are rightly implanted in rational souls. He conceives education in terms of moral training. In Aristotle’s view, education is the process of developing a sound mind in a sound body. Men sona in copore sano. While Rousseau sees education as the development of the individual from within, by interacting with the natural environment with the aim of fitting him properly into the society. More comprehensively, Frankena (2007) avers that education takes place when “X” is fostering “Y” some disposition “D” by method “M\ He explains serially as follows; “X” represents the society, the teacher, or whoever is educating, including oneself. “Y” represents the learner who may be a child, a youth, an adult or oneself. “D” represents disposition, belief, habits, knowledge, skills, attitude etc. considered desirable for the learner to have both for himself and his society. “M” represents methods that are satisfactory, which pay due regard to the interest, the willingness, and the personal integrity of the learner and also involve his active participation. Finally, Ukeje (2009) views education from three different perspectives; as a process; as a product and as a discipline. Viewed as a process, education is the means 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 means change in behavior. And as a discipline, education is a 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 young.

### Aim and objectives of Nigerian Education

The aim of education in Nigeria according to the National Policy on Education (FGN 2014:40), is to inculcate national consciousness and national unity, values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society. However, the National policy on education again avers that the objectives of Nigerian education includes;

1. **A Free and Democratic Society:** Democracy according to Oxford advanced learner’s dictionary (6<sup>th</sup> edition), is a belief in political freedom and equality. There can never be democracy without freedom. Freedom is a natural gift to man. Democracy in its elementary understanding refers to “the government of the people, by the people and for the people”. In a democratic society, the people freely choose leaders

among themselves. But the Nigerian experience is directly the opposite.

2. **A Just and Egalitarian Society:** A just and egalitarian society refers to a society where merit takes precedence over mediocrity. In an egalitarian society, everybody is equal before the law. But unfortunately in the Nigerian experience, the law is meant for the poor and the rich has a way to amend any section of the law that affects them directly. They (the rich) can influence judges to up-turn or set aside any judgment that affects them. This contradicts the saying that 'everybody is equal before the law'.

3. **A United Strong and Self-Reliant Nation:** Unity, strength and self-reliance could be seen as the summary of the national vision of Nigeria. Self-Reliance is very important for any nation. No nation achieves unity and strength without being self-reliant. But the question is how united and self-reliant is Nigeria as a nation. This is a question that every citizen of Nigeria should ponder upon.

4. **A Great and Dynamic Economy:** a great and dynamic economy to a nation refers to a country whose economic resources are diversified; a country whose economy is channeled and directed to meet the current demands - both local and international. Nigeria's dependence on crude-oil which makes her a mono-economy is a contributing factor to the economic challenges faced by the nation. For Nigeria to be great and have a dynamic economy, there should be a paradigm shift from crude-oil to other mineral resources or other sectors of the economy.

5. **A Land of Bright and Full Opportunities for all Citizens:** This objective has already been discussed under the other objectives. Once a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation and a great and dynamic economy is met, there will be bright and full opportunities for all citizens. But in Nigeria, this objective is impeded by several factors ranging from; ethnicity/tribalism, God-fatherism, nepotism etc.

## **NATION**

According to Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (6<sup>th</sup> Edition), a nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, ethnicity and / or psychological make-up manifested in a common culture. It is also an association of people based on their birthplace and ethnicity. Asira (2017), views it as a group of people who share common origin, language, history, culture and government. They usually have identity and consciousness.

### **National Integration**

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary; (6<sup>th</sup> edition), integration is seen as the process of making a whole or entire. It is also the process of fitting into a community. Integration can also be seen as the summing of different parts or groups to form a whole.

National Integration is the feeling of togetherness or oneness towards one's own country irrespective of their individual differences with regards to region, religion, culture, race or caste. It is not only about national spirit, it involves a feeling of that which brings people from all areas, dialects and beliefs together in a common endeavor. When national integration occurs, individuals are likely to work together to build systems that enhance the prosperity of a nation and its people.

### **Importance of National Integration**

National integration is very essential for the development of a nation. This is shown in Abraham (2017) as follows;

1. National integration promotes development of national unity
2. Citizens develop a spirit of responsiveness when dealing with national calamities and disasters
3. It promotes patriotism and loyalty among the citizens.
4. It reduces fear, suspicion and strife
5. National integration enables a country to develop a sense of national direction hence people develop and work towards achievement of unified (common) national goals.
6. It promotes peaceful co-existence of different ethnic groups and races.
7. Enhances national unity and rapid development in commerce and industry, leading to social and economic progress of the nation.

### **Education and National Integration**

Education is a very powerful weapon for national integration. Through education we may give the

necessary motivations to children, i.e., the future citizens of the nation.

In the organization of curriculum, in admission in various educational centers and in appointment of teachers our general policy should be such as to encourage the propagation of national elements and not to give any place to caste, religion, class and community.

In the organizations of our schools, colleges and universities preference should be given to national ideas whenever possible only then we shall be able to promote national integration in the students, teachers and the people as a whole. It is true that education should be organized according to local needs, but even in such an organization national elements must never be overlooked.

### **Roles of Education in National Integration**

Education is something that plays a very important role in national integration. It can unite the people and create a bond which will be strong enough to overcome any challenges faced by the country either it's economic, political issues, etc. It plays the following roles in Uriah (2019) views;

1. Education provides people with knowledge that is very essential for national integration.
2. It brings uniformity among people of the country and helps them to differentiate among things that play a role in their lives.
3. Education also creates awareness of our responsibilities to inculcate values and balance our lives.
4. It can unite the people and create a bond which will be strong enough to overcome any challenges faced by a country either its economic, political, social issues, etc.
5. Education gives maturity, understanding and knowledge of what is happening around and so with this knowledge, one understands the actual meaning of integration of themselves (citizens of a nation).
6. It shapes peoples' mind and heart for its past and present to have a cooperative and integrated Nigerian future.
7. Education imbues in citizens the consciousness of the strength in togetherness.

### **An Examination of Government Programmes Aimed at Promoting National Integration in Nigeria**

Knowing that Nigeria is a pluralist/multi-ethnic nation, several efforts have been put in place starting from the colonial era to create systems, institutions and programmes of government aimed at promoting national integration. Citing the scholarly works of Ojo (2009), Bulama (2012), Akpan (1990) and Ugoh & Ukpere (2012), some of these have been identified below:

#### **Introduction of Federal System**

The colonial administration in Nigeria in 1954 using the instrumentality of the Lyttleton constitution introduced federalism into Nigeria as an integrative mechanism. The colonialists must have been swayed by the opinion that such a system of government was necessary to preserve both integration and stability in a deeply divided society like Nigeria. As Osaghae (1987) observed, whenever events seemed to demand that a compromise be effected between the necessity for unity and co-operation on a wide territorial basis on one hand, and the need to accommodate the legitimate claims of sub-national groups for self-rule on the other, "the temptation is to proffer a catch-all management formula such as federalism." While federalism has been applauded as a silver bullet to the ethnicity problem in Nigeria, the skewness and perversion of this typology of governance has frustrated the benefits it could have provided the nation.

#### **State Creation**

The creation of states in 1967 and the land use decree were mechanisms put in place to strengthen Nigeria's unity. Immediately before the Nigerian Civil War, as a way to strengthen the reversion of the country to federalism, General Gowon resorted to the creation of more states in a bid to keep the country united. Gowon's administration felt the problem confronting the operation of federalism in the three regions was that the regions were so powerful as to consider them self-sufficient and almost entirely independent. The federal government which ought to give the lead to the whole country was relegated to the background. The people were not made to realize that the federal government was the real government of Nigeria. In order to strengthen the federal government, the regions were taken to the slab of sacrifice resulting in the creation of 12 states in 1967. Subsequently, the creation of states curtailed the domineering tendencies of the major ethnic groups of Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo. And secured some

measure of autonomy for the minority groups. Members of the major ethnic groups now find themselves as minorities in some newly created states, while those who have hitherto been minorities in the old states now find themselves as majorities in some new states. As Bulama,(2012) noted, the old regional hegemony by the three major tribes in their respective regions is now a thing of the past. Between 1960 and 1996, creation of states within the federal system comprised 3 regions (1960), 4 regions (1963), 12 states (1967), 19 states (1976), 21 states (1987), 30 states (1991) and 36 states in 1996. The Land Use Decree on its part vests all land in a state in the Governor of the state that holds the land in trust for the use and common benefit of all Nigerians. The rationale being that the Governor can allocate land to any applicant irrespective of his or her state of origin. However, in reality, Nigerians are discriminated against from buying certain pieces of land because of ethnic and religious considerations.

### **Introduction of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)**

Furthermore, the National Youth Service Corps was conceived as another policy that could help unite the country. Created by Decree No. 24 of May 22, 1973, the National Youth service Corps (NYSC) sought to enhance the interaction among the nascent educated elite in the country scattered in different parts of the country by providing them with the opportunity of living and serving in some developmental capacities in states other than their places of origin so they could better understand the cultures, perhaps the language and general lifestyle of their host communities. Thus, while helping to develop different parts of Nigeria through their one-year compulsory national service, young educated Nigerians were to also understand more about their other “brethren” living in other parts of Nigeria, their strengths and challenges. This was to be useful for these young ones when they assume leadership position because they would be able to proffer solutions to the challenges other Nigerians are facing and be guided and inspired by the strengths of other Nigerians. However, the scheme has been fraught with ethnic consideration, favoritism and cronyism in the posting of corps members, exposure of these youths to security risks as was seen during the 2011 General Elections where many corps members of Southern descent were butchered by some angry northern youths, corruption and misappropriation of funds. As Ojo (2009) noted, another dimension to the problem facing the thriving of the NYSC in Nigeria is the problematic nature of citizenship, indigeneship and settler status in Nigeria. In this sense, many Nigerian youths have experienced more of frustration rather than integration because after serving in a particular state other than theirs, they do not expect to get jobs where they have thanklessly undergone the NYSC programme because in many cases, they would be tagged as non-indigenes and will be forced to go back to their states of origin to avoid being discriminated against. Even when they are employed, it is on a contract basis.

### **Federal Character Principle**

Another nation-building policy was the Federal Character Principle initiated by the government. The aim of the policy was 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 & Ukpere, 2012). The federal character principle was later enshrined in the 1979 Constitution of Nigeria with the goal to accommodate the diverse linguistic, ethnic, religious and geographic groups in the decision-making, socio-political and economic apparatuses of the state. The policy also aimed to foster unity, peace, equal access to state resources and promote the integration of the less advantaged states for better improvement and good conditions of living in the country. Nevertheless, as laudable as the policy was, there was a yawning gap between intent and actual practice of the policy, thus making it counterproductive. The policy has been criticized for introducing crass mediocrity into the public service, weak at fighting ethnicity, cronyism and corruption and has been politicized. It is thus seen as engendering instability rather than integration.

### **Moving Nigeria’s Capital from Lagos to Abuja**

The movement of the Federal Capital Territory from Lagos to Abuja on 12 December, 1991 was seen as an integrative policy of government to further unite Nigerians. As Bulama (n.d.) observed, tribal-related problems formed part of the reasons that led to the choice of Abuja as the new Federal Capital Territory. According to Bulama, the underlying tribal considerations were vividly enunciated in the Report of the Committee on the location of the Federal Capital Territory. The report stated inter alia that: There is no doubt that Nigeria is a federation, consisting of a large number of ethnic and language groups with differing culture and traditions. Now, Lagos is within an area traditionally belonging to one of the major ethnic groups, namely, the Yoruba ... In our view, the circumstances of Nigeria demand that the capital be

not situated within a city the type of Lagos with strong connection with one of the major ethnic groups. In contrast, as Bulama writes, Abuja was chosen upon the following considerations that: It is our belief that one way for forging the idea of unity of this nation is by building a capital city which will be central and belong to every other Nigerian, where every Nigerian will rest assured that he has an opportunity to live in parity with every other Nigerian, and where no Nigerian will be regarded either in law or in the facts as a "native foreigner.

As Ojo (1998) argues, both the politics and administration of the new federal capital territory have not been helpful. The arrangement is so haphazard that the Chairman and some members of the committee that recommended the new capital have openly lamented that the essence of the new capital has been jettisoned. The whole essence of the concept of a new federal capital territory as a symbol of unity and nationhood has been completely put into abeyance. In a nutshell, it appears Abuja is organized as "a revenge project" because some northern elements see it as belonging to the north. Indeed it is evidenced.

#### **Revenue Sharing Formula**

Another effort was the introduction of the revenue sharing formula which was aimed at addressing the violence taking place in the oil rich delta, Nigeria's golden goose, and was a response to quell the agitation for resource control. For instance, the 1999 constitution allocated 15% to those oil producing states via the derivation principle. Although it is early to judge the impact the policy will have on the overall socio-economic framework in the South-South, evidence of growth spurts is beginning to be seen in such states as Akwa Ibom, Delta and even Bayelsa. As long as the governors of the oil rich delta states eschew kleptocracy, funds earned through derivation could be channeled towards addressing environmental degradation, infrastructural decay and the vicious cycle of underdevelopment in existence. Beyond increased revenue allocation; the Niger Delta Development Corporation (NDDC) was established to initiate development strides for the region.

#### **Tertiary Education Policy (Quota)/National Policy on Education (NPE)**

The unifying National Policy on Tertiary Education is another factor that Akpan (1990) considers to be aimed at national integration in Nigeria. In this sense, Akpan argues that Nigerian universities were seen to "serve as instruments for fostering national unity". Quoting the National Policy on Education, Akpan asserted that for universities to serve as effective instruments for cementing national unity (i) The quality of instruction in Nigerian Universities would be improved with a view to further enhancing objectivity and tolerance; (ii) University development would ensure a more even geographical distribution to provide a fairer spread of higher educational facilities; (iii) Admission of students and recruitment of staff into universities and other institutions of higher learning would be on a broad national basis; (iv) Universities would be required to develop teacher and student exchange programmes to improve both inter-university communication and knowledge of the country; (v) And widespread ignorance among Nigerian groups about each other and about themselves would be remedied by instituting a compulsory first year course in the social organization, customs, culture and history of the nations and its peoples.

The award of degrees is to be contingent upon passing this course. However, Akpan rues the failure of higher institutions in the country, especially universities to be an integrative tool because (i) most universities in the country have exceeded the 30% quota for the 'locality' criterion favoring individual states where the universities are located more than other areas; (ii) universities recruit most of their students from their immediate geo-political and cultural environments. The proportions range from 34% for the University of Calabar to 65% for ABU Zaria. Interesting exceptions are found in the University of Ilorin, though located in the Northern geo-political region but draws 2% of its students from the North as compared with 51% from the South-west, and the University of Benin which though located in the Mid-West geo-political region draws almost twice as many students from the South-east; (iii) there exists a clear distinction in the pattern of student recruitment between the Northern and the Southern universities. The percentage of Northern students enrolled in Southern universities is extremely low. In the East, it rarely exceeds one percent, and in the West it varies from two to seven percent. On the contrary, the percentage of Southern students enrolled in Northern universities is quite substantial, ranging from three percent at Bayero University, Kano, to fifty-seven at the University of Ilorin. To make the universities an instrument of integration, more needs to be done to address challenges.

Other measures taken by successive governments over the years to meet the yearning for national

integration in the country have been:

1. **The introduction of the principle of National Integration by the 1979 constitution**, which was a deliberate effort to tackle the problem facing the practice of a true federalism. The constitutional approach to national integration recognizes the diverse and plural nature of the Nigerian society. The constitution is therefore directed towards combating what has been described as the 'parochialism of Ignorance' that breeds suspicion and distrust among the various ethnic groups.
2. Establishment of unity Schools also called the federal government colleges in 1969 run by the federal government is aimed to promote unity in diversity and national integration.
3. Introduction of a uniform Local Government system in Nigeria is yet another measure.

### **Major Hurdles towards National Integration in Nigeria**

While it is easy and very tempting to blame the colonialists for all of Nigeria's woes, history and recent events in the country have revealed the covert selfishness, hunger for power and primitive accumulation exhibited by the political elites. Much worse than this, many political leaders exploit ethnicity for personal advantages.

**Consequently, the first hurdle in the path of national integration in Nigeria is the coup d'état (1966).** A coup is an overthrow of an existing government. It is an illegal and unconstitutional seizure of power by a dictator, the military or a political faction. The coup of 1966 was led by Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and Emmanuel Ifeajuna and it claimed 22 lives prominent among which are; Sir Abubakar Tafawa Belewa, Sir Ahmadu Bello (Saduana of Sokoto), etc. This brought in Major General Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi as the Head of state, thereby, ending Nigeria's nascent democracy. The Northerners perceived the coup as Ibo plot. This was one of the events that led to the Nigerian civil war. It is a bane to national integration.

**Secondly, the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970)** is another hurdle to national integration. The war between the government of Nigeria and the state of Biafra was a result of conflict which resulted from political, economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions which preceded Britain's formal decolonization of Nigeria (1960-1963). The immediate causes of the war included ethno-religious riots in Northern Nigeria which claimed the lives of many Ibo people and the military coup (1966) which the North perceived was masterminded by the Ibos. The war claimed many souls; both the Northerners and the Southerners. The war left an indelible scar in the minds of the two major regions of the country, thereby promoting the quest for disintegration of Nigerian nation.

**The third hurdle** has been a regenerative breed of selfish and greedy political gladiators who seize power through the barrel of the gun or through stolen electoral mandates. As they competed for power, prestige and associated benefits, the political elite in a bid to secure the support of members of their own ethnic groups accentuate ethnic differences and demonize members of other ethnic groups. The brutal killings of youth corps members in the North following the declaration of the results of the presidential elections in 1993 and 2011 speak volumes of the naked thirst for power and political position which brings out the beast in political leaders.

**Fourthly**, corruption has so permeated the entire fabric of state that the issues that cause disaffection among ethnic nationalities in the country such as poverty, hunger, illiteracy and its attendant limited opportunities, unemployment, marginalization, infrastructural decay, homelessness and lack of access to quality health care are products of corruption. Rather than look to the West to find solutions for corruption, Nigeria should begin to look to the East (Asia) where capital or severe punishment is meted out on corrupt state officials.

**Fifthly**, skewed federal system as it is being practiced in Nigeria today is another challenge for national integration. In their very thorough study on the failure of the federal system to address the question of unity, local rule and development in the country, Ihonopi & Urim (2012) argue that federalism as it is presently practiced in Nigeria suffers because of lack of fiscal federalism, over-centralization of power at the centre, laidback or non-viable states, absence of state police, among others. More importantly, federalism in Nigeria has failed to guarantee national integration on one hand and yet fails to guarantee local rule on the other hand. According to them, although Nigeria does not have a better option for democracy, it cannot continue to administer the polity based on the existing federal arrangement.

**The sixth hurdle** is the fear of losing control by the ruling class is another issue standing in the path of national integration in Nigeria. For many years now, the people of Nigeria have continuously canvassed for an opportunity to hold a national conversation (National Confab) to address the present political configuration called Nigeria all to no avail. Building on the scholarly work of Nnoli (2009), Ifeanchi & Nwagwu (2009) have contended that the ruling class in Nigeria inherited a state structure and has left it without any form of modification or moderation until now. According to them, instead, the ruling class is preoccupied with the use of state paraphernalia for accumulating surplus without producing this surplus. The resultant contradiction is an institutionalized myopic and visionless ethnic-centered leadership with separatist and particularistic political outlook (Nnoli 2009).

**Seventhly**, lack of political will to do the right thing by the political leadership has remained one reason the country has continued to flounder in the sea of confusion and tottering the precipice of ethnic division. Another hurdle to realizing national integration in Nigeria is the existence of weak institutions of the state. It seems these institutions are kept weak to feather the political and economic fortunes of the ruling class. In Nigeria, it is criminal to be honest and honest to be criminal. Such weak, embryonic, sterile, insensitive and amoral characteristics of state institutions have further tilted Nigeria to the precipice. Lastly, lack of fairness, justice and equity in the country with regard to resource allocation and distribution, power sharing, enjoyment of fundamental human rights and punishment of criminals who hide under political umbrellas or bunkers created by the ruling classes take the country backwards with regard to national cohesion. The fight against corruption is done selectively by the ruling federal government. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is now an outfit of All Progressive Congress (APC).

### **Current Challenges Confronting National Integration**

#### **The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)**

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a group that leads the call for Biafran's freedom from Nigeria. Its main aim is to create an independent state for the people of Old Eastern region of Nigeria through referendum. The group was founded in 2012 by "Nnamdi Kanu", who has resurfaced the issue of independence of the Indigenous Biafran population from Nigeria. They have issued calls for a peaceful settlement of their grievances through a referendum in the Nigerian states that were part of the old Eastern region. Their agitation is based on marginalization. This is a challenge to national integration.

#### **The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP)**

This is a mass based social movement organization of the indigenous Ogoni people of the central Niger Delta. MOSOP is the umbrella organization of currently eleven (11) member groups representing more than seven hundred thousand (700,000) indigenous Ogoni people in campaigning for social, economic and environmental justice in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. MOSOP's mandated use of non-violent methods to promote democratic principles to assist them pursue rights of self-determination in environmental issues in the Niger Delta, cultural rights and practices for Ogoni people. Their agitation is based on environmental pollution, resource control and marginalization by the dominant ethnic groups of Hausa-Fulani, Yorubas and Ibos.

#### **Boko Haram Menace**

Boko Haram is a jihadist terrorist organization based in Northeastern Nigeria, also active in Chad, Niger and Northern Cameroon. It comprises of group of people of Sunnah set aside for preaching and jihad. It metamorphosed from the "Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) or Islamic States West African Province (ISWAP). To "Jama'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah Wa'l-Jihad. But now it is addressed as Boko Haram. It is a threat to National integration.

#### **The Niger Delta Militancy**

The current conflict in the Niger Delta first arose in the early 1990s over tensions between foreign oil corporations and a number of the Niger Delta's minority ethnic groups who feel they are being exploited, particularly the Ogoni and the Ijaw. Ethnic and political unrest has continued throughout the 1990s despite the conversion to democracy. Competition for oil wealth has fueled violence between ethnic groups, causing the militarization of nearly the entire region by ethnic militia groups, Nigerian military and police forces; notably the Nigerian Mobile police. The violence has contributed to Nigeria's ongoing



energy supply crisis by discouraging foreign investment in the new power generation plants in the region.

#### **Fulani herdsmen or Fulani Pastoralists**

Fulani herdsmen are nomadic or semi-nomadic Fulani people whose primary occupation is rearing of livestock. They are largely located in the Sahel and semi-arid parts of West Africa, but due to relatively recent changes in climate patterns, many herdsmen have moved further South into the savannah and tropical forest belt of West Africa. The herdsmen are found in countries such as; Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroon. In many of these countries, the Fulani herdsmen often constitute a minority group. Currently, there are several clashes between them and farmers which have led some states to deny them entrance to certain areas of their states. This does not promote national integration as their activities had caused many deaths, destruction of properties and constituted a social nuisance in the Nigerian state; hence antithetical to the spirit of national integration.

#### **Arewa Youths' Forum (AYF)**

Arewa Youths' Forum (AYF) is a political and cultural association of leaders in Northern Nigeria formed in the year 2000 which has considerable influence in the political scene. Arewa means Northern in Hausa; the primary language of the region. The forum is a successor to the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) which collapsed after the coup of 1966. The Arewa consultative forum (ACF) has been associated environmental pollution, resource control and marginalization by the dominant ethnic groups of Hausa-Fulani, Yorubas and Ibos.

#### **O'Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC)**

Nigeria has witnessed an increase in the activities of ethnic and regional militia, vigilantes and other armed groups in the past few years. One of the better known of these groups is the O'Odua people's congress (OPC), an organization active in the South-West of Nigeria. O'odua people's congress (OPC) campaigns to protect the interests of the Yoruba ethnic groups and seeks autonomy for the Yoruba people. The O'odua people's congress (OPC) was established in 1994 with the aim of overcoming what it alleged was political marginalization of the Yorubas. Its activities have ranged from political agitation for Yoruba autonomy and promotion of Yoruba culture to violent confrontation with members of other ethnic groups. They (OPC) have been responsible for numerous human rights abuses and acts of violence, and its members have killed or injured hundreds of unarmed civilians. This opposes the spirit of national integration.

#### **Communalism**

Communalism is one of the greatest obstacles on the way of national integration. There are many communities, tribal groups and parties in Nigeria trying their best to snatch the fruit of independence to satisfying their selfish desires ignoring the interest of the society as a whole. As a result of which, every now and then, we have communal riots taking place in different parts of our country.

#### **Casteism**

In ancient times Nigerian society was divided into a number of castes and sub-castes based on birth. The people of high castes develop a feeling of superiority towards the low caste. This causes bitterness among the people. It becomes very difficult to develop a sense of oneness among the people. Especially when some people claimed they are born to rule.

#### **Regionalism**

Regionalism is also an obstacle on the way of national integration. Now our country has been divided into a number of states. This develops a rivalry between different regions, different states and also within the state. Now the people of South have started agitation against the outsiders living in these states which go against national integration.

#### **Linguistic problem**

Nigeria is a land of many languages. This variety of language is an indication of cultural enrichment. But it is a matter of regret that a number of 'linguistic conflicts exist in our country. People have developed a tendency of unwillingness to grant to other languages the same rights as they claim for their own. Quarrel or conflict over languages will definitely disintegrate us.

#### **Religious Prejudices**

Every community is free to develop its religion but not at the cost of other religions. Nigeria is a secular

country but still there are sudden out breaks of violence in the name of religion. Our people do not have sufficient knowledge about different religions and ways of life of others. So they become suspicious of other religions and hate them which create an obstacle on the way of national integration. There is continuous rivalry and suspicion between the Muslims and the Christians in Nigerian state.

#### **Defective Education System**

It is education which can change the fate of the country. A national system of education can bring integration among the people. Defective education system becomes an obstacle to national integration. Example; different standards (double standards) of admission, lowering standard for some states in unity schools and universities.

#### **Excessive Quest for Political Power**

Excessive quest for political power among politicians along the political divides; North vs. South can threaten the integration of the country, if it is not adequately handled.

### **PROSPECTS OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION**

The following measures or panacea must be taken in improving the quest for national integration;

#### **Justice**

If Nigeria must pursue National Integration to logical conclusion, there should be justice, fairness and equity. Everybody must be treated equally and fairly. You do not bend the rules to favour some persons and disfavour some persons irrespective of the region (North or South) they belong.

#### **Emotional Unity**

For national integration, the people of the land must come together into one emotional thread. There can be no national integration unless all the people consider themselves as one.

#### **Social Unity**

We have mentioned various types of social inequalities found in our country on the basis of religion, caste, community, class, region, wealth etc. people of the various factions of the country do not have a feeling of sympathy and brotherhood for each other. For the sake of national integration, we should bring the various people together in a common bond. For this, some cultural functions should be organized and all should be urged to attend.

#### **Inter Caste/Inter Ethnic Marriages**

Some people advocate for inter caste and inter-ethnic marriages for national integration to be strengthened.

#### **Economic Unity**

Economic inequalities dominate our country. But for the sake of national integration, the country has to see that none of its parts is particularly backward from the economic viewpoint. For this, the backward parts/minorities should be accorded special assistance for the general upliftment.

#### **National Language**

Although difficult for nations with diverse tribes and cultures, the issue of national language is critical for national integration. Beyond English language, conscious attempt should be made to have a national language.

#### **Political Integration**

There should be political inclusiveness and political unity for national integration to strife. Nigeria should try to harmonize its political institution so that players in the institution will cooperate thereby strengthening national integration.

#### **Education**

Education is very critical for national integration. It gives the necessary motivation to citizens. It imbues the consciousness of oneness into citizens of a nation thereby promoting national integration.

### **CONCLUSION**

Nigeria is a multicultural society, a conglomerate of nations with different peoples and cultures, a basket of different religions and world-views and a country with the diverse expectations of its people. As a recipe for Nigeria's growth and development, and by extension cohesion, there is need to recognize that none of the ethnic groups, big or small, shares a uniform dream about Nigeria. This is because the ethnic

groups' worldviews are completely different such as their expectations from their leaders, their notions of government, their moral standards, their perceptions and understanding of religion, their ideas of how to live and regulate their lives and their goals and missions as ethnic nationalities. The paper expatiated this viewpoint with the example that Nigeria's heterogeneity can be seen in this wise: whereas one group would want their children to go to school, some others would want theirs to go to the farms and mosques; while a group could relate with men of another faith without any friction, another is odiously intolerant; while some are willing to move along with the twenty-first century and be a part of the world, others want to bask in the bliss of the blind Stone Age. These choices are not wrong in themselves; ethnic groups must be allowed to make their different choices, being different people with different cultures, dreams, hopes and aspirations. This cannot obviously happen until a consensual agreement is reached by all Nigerians on the future of the country. By writing in the constitution the indivisibility of the country, the military drafters of that constitution failed to respect the wishes of the Nigerian people and that sovereignty lies in and with the people. For the country to forestall a repeat of war in the country, the establishment must begin to listen to the people and take steps to remedy years of wrongs and injustices.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In order to achieve national integration, therefore, not only must the government reel out fantastic policies and programmes, **it must begin to build enduring institutions bigger and more powerful than the leadership.** For example; the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC), the National Assembly, etc. should be strengthened if the clamour for National integration will succeed.
2. **The leadership must become more accountable to the people** and those members of the ruling class who fan the embers of hate, exploitation, ethnicity, marginalization and underdevelopment must be made to face the full wrath of the law.
3. **Corruption which has become endemic must be fought** until it is either eradicated or forcibly punished so that those who engage in it do so at their own risk.
4. **Mass mobilization of the hoi polloi** (masses or common people) is necessary to reorient them with the right values consistent with a modern and emerging economy. Nigeria's diversity is not the problem, the managers of the state are. Nigerians must arise from the ashes of fear, wrongly inspired awe for political leaders and timidity and begin to make demands on the political leadership on what they want. For instance, the fuel subsidy strike of January 2012 sent an eruptive message to the ruling class that the people would no longer sit idly and watch them ride the country aground. The time to question the artificiality of Nigeria and to demand for a tinkering of this mammoth political edifice in line with the expectations of the Nigerian people is now. To claim this victory, the people must lead this vanguard of change if the dream of national integration must be sustained.
5. **Resource Control:** Communities and States where natural resources are located should be allowed to develop and utilize these resources without inference from the federal government. A common thread linking all the protests is the feeling of the people in spite of their oil resources and the governmental deterioration consequent on the resources exploitation. Once resource control is granted, national integration will be encouraged.
6. **The Judiciary should be made stronger, autonomous and independent** not on paper but real independent from political manipulations.
7. **The need to re-examine our nation state;** hence call for national dialogue, colloquium or national conference is imperative and critical to national integration now than ever.

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