



## REALIZING THE EDUCATION AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND NATIONAL COHESION IN NIGERIA: CONSTRAINTS AND STRATEGIES

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### ABSTRACT

The paper examined realizing the education agenda for sustainable development and national cohesion in Nigeria: constraints and strategies. Constraints to the realization of the education agenda for sustainable development and national cohesion were stated such as: poor funding, poor management, infrastructural decay, and teacher qualification, poor salaries of education workers, poor data collection, and conflict between different levels of government, change of public office holders, inadequate planning professionals and institutions. Others include; corruption, inadequate information, illiteracy, ethnic and cultural diversity, youth restiveness, nepotism and political polarization. Prospects for the realization of the education agenda for sustainable development and national cohesion in Nigeria were discussed such as: education as a tool for national development, education for fostering and transmitting national ideology, education quality, and education as a vehicle for self-reliance, education for societal discipline, education for national cohesion and education for competent leadership. Among other suggestions, it was suggested that, education facilities should be built, upgraded and made safe for effective teaching and learning environment.

**Keywords:** Education, Agenda, Sustainable Development, National Cohesion, Realize.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian education agenda is the nation's commitment to meeting the academic needs of individuals and making use of the instrumentality of education to bring about social change and national development. Nigeria like most countries in the world, has translated her commitment to

education or education agenda into a written document. Thus, the education agenda of Nigeria is enshrined in her national policy on education. The policy articulates the objectives, guidelines, standards, structures, strategies and management for actualizing the national education goals, which is expected to operate within the philosophical circumference of the nation. Nigeria's philosophy of education comprises of the following:

- Education is a tool for nation building and social change;
- Education is pivotal for the promotion of peace and an indivisible nation;
- Education harnesses the potentials and latent skills of individuals leading to self-fulfillment and the development of the society at large;
- Education is mandatory and a right of all Nigerians irrespective of status, background or challenges of individuals; and
- Education is to be proactive and relevant to the societal needs.

The educational goals of Nigeria consist of the following:

- The development of persons into people of integrity, effective citizens with love for their country;
- Complete integration and incorporation of individuals into their immediate environment, to face the social realities both within and outside the country;
- To provide equal access to quality education for all citizens at all levels of education;
- To impress upon the minds of the citizenry, national consciousness, values and national unity;
- Development of the right skills, physical, mental and social abilities and capabilities, in order to enable individuals to be self-reliant and contribute meaningfully to the development of society (FRN, 2014, p. 2).

The value and importance of education for realizing sustainable national development and cohesion cannot be overstated. Education makes an indelible mark in the universe which only few may observe but, from which the world profits. It is responsible for the change and improvement of human activities, and there is no limitation to the extent of development it brings to a nation. Momentarily, new discoveries are uncovered which open fresh doors of opportunities and development owing to the impact of education. In the words of Aristotle "education is the best provision (Farris, 1999).

Education is the instrument by which skills, character and moral are instilled or transmitted from an individual (teacher) to another individual (learner). It is one sure way of promoting national development and cohesion in a nation. It is a proactive way or approach by which conflict is prevented in advance, tolerance among individuals and societies is encouraged, unity, equality, respect for individual and societal differences and social justice are promoted (Okediji, 2015). According to Bacchus (2008), through the instrumentality of education, equity, maintenance of cultural diversity in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies are achieved. He further upholds that, through education, political cohesion, social stability and sustainable socioeconomic development can be realized.

Nigeria like other developing nations in the globe has a lot of expectations for their education system. Countries believe that formal education will churn out the labour force to settle their manpower requirements, the leadership for their bureaucracies and well-informed

citizenry for an enlightened social order. Nigeria as a country does not lack policy. As a matter of fact, Nigeria has one of the best policies on education but, the problem has always been that of implementation. The essence of policies on education is to ensure the appropriate management and implementation of the education system. Thus, there are problems bordering on the management and implementation of the education system in Nigeria.

Nigeria like other pluralistic nations and governments around the globe, earnestly expect that formal education will help in the promotion of sustainable national development and cohesion in societies fragmented by linguistic, religious, ethnic or cultural differences. The federal system of government was adopted in Nigeria in recognition of the social reality on ground and to address the profound cultural diversities. Nigeria as a country was formed in a mould cast by colonial subjugation, rather than traditional, aboriginal or historical ancestry. The country is characterized by a relationship of customary contentions and hostility among the many tribes or ethnicities within her borders (Peshkin, 1967).

The zenith of the hostility in Nigeria was gruesomely experienced in 1967, when the country was plunged into a civil war that lasted for about three years. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa and the largest black nation in the world gained independence on a platter of gold. The colonialist granted the country freedom from control without seriously considering the reality that, Nigeria is divided along ethnic, religious and cultural lines. The country comprises of the Hausa (northern Muslims), Igbo (eastern Christians), Yoruba (westerners comprising of both religions) and other smaller ethnic groups in the south with a Christian population. At the time, Lagos was the federal capital territory, which happens to be in the domain of the Yoruba ethnic group. Since then, there has been a fierce power tussle among the various groups. In an attempt to coexist, power is shared.

However, this has not calmed the contentions, lamentations and agitations of marginalization by the various ethnic groups. This has fueled disintegration and hampered development in Nigeria. The results of the apparent suspicion and power tussle among the ethnic groups have led to coups and counter-coups with ethnic colouration. In 1967, the situation degenerated to a civil war after Col. Ojukwu declared independence for Biafra, the Igbo ethnic nationality (Mike, 2006).

Colonialism with its instrument of military coercion and administration of Nigeria, fabricated a resemblance of peace and cohesion among ethnic territories. The use of a common lingua franca in government and business, the development of trade and transport and the creation of trans-ethnic administrative components attempted to broaden political identifications. However, some features of colonialism and colonial legacy dampened the momentum of national development and cohesion.

The relegation of the Nigerian economy to a cash crop economy, to cushion the raw material needs of foreign industries, repatriation of funds realized during colonialism to the home country of the colonialists, entrenchment of separate government structures for the North and South. The impact of indirect rule, through the British governed, in cooperated controllable traditional leaders under a reign of harmony. This aided the spread of traditional ethnic cultures especially in Northern Nigeria, where the Hausa/Fulani traditional leadership resisted western education. Nonetheless, education remains a veritable tool with which to realize the education agenda and sustainable national development and cohesion in the face of the stated challenges confronting Nigeria.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

### **Education Agenda**

Education agenda is the international or universal crusade for education for all. It is the worldwide movement which advocates for the guarantee of basic education for all human beings. UNESCO (2017) states that, education agenda refers to the commitment of all countries of the world to meeting the learning needs of all children, youth and adults. It further posits that, it is an essential aspect of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

### **Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development means finding a better way of doing things in order to meet our present needs so as not to impair the quality of future generations to battle their own needs. Thus, sustainable development is the development that is introduced by the present generation, which will outlive them and last for the benefit of future generations. According to the Brundtland Report in USD, sustainable development is that development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

### **National Cohesion**

National cohesion is a deliberate effort of all citizens made towards the reduction or possible elimination of ethnic conflicts caused by religious, political, economic and cultural differences for the sake of peaceful coexistence among the peoples in a nation. Obinelo (2018) asserts that, national cohesion is the acceptance of other ethnic groups into a single nationhood in one accord. It is the acceptance of ethnic groups irrespective of religion, geographical location and cultural differences. He adds, national cohesion means coexisting as one people and ensuring that every citizen shares the true identity of a single nation. It speaks of integration and embracing others as part and parcel of one nation without regarding any group as inferior or superior but as a people having the same fundamental human rights as stipulated by the law of the land.

### **Realize**

Realize means to make something become real. It is to achieve a goal or an objective. The oxford dictionary defines realize as, to cause something to happen. To achieve something desired or anticipated.

### **Education Agenda for Sustainable National Development and Cohesion**

The burning expectation from education is that, education will lead to greater economic efficiency, productivity and development (Rao, 2004). Pratap (2014) opines that, through the vehicle of education, learners are prepared for jobs, specific trades, vocations or occupations and other practical activities. This leads to an improvement of the learners, who develop expertise and skills in specific technologies. This acts as a catalyst for national development. Pratap in Ololube (2009), recognizing the pivotal role of education for sustainable national development and cohesion succinctly stated that, for Nigeria to achieve development, cohesion and personal

comfort, the instrumentality of education cannot be over accentuated. Schools must be more effective to carry out their functions. However, sustainable national development and cohesion can be propagated through the following ways according to UNESCO (2017):

- Ensure that all children irrespective of their sex attend and complete free, equitable and quality basic education and post primary education that will lead to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
- Ensure that every boy and girl have access to quality early childhood development, attention and pre-primary education so as to be prepared for primary education.
- There should be equal access to education for all women and men, cheap and quality vocational education, tertiary and technical education and also university, irrespective of their background in Nigeria.
- Rapidly increase the number of individuals who have relevant skills or knowledge, including vocational and technical skills for good jobs, employment and entrepreneurship.
- Eradicate gender disparities in education and insist on equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the defenseless, including the physically challenged people, indigenes and children in situations that are vulnerable.
- Ensure that a good percentage of citizens are educated.
- Ensure that every learner acquire the skills and knowledge requisite for the promotion of suitable development through education leading to greater equality, human rights, peaceful co-existence and civil global citizens and appreciation of cultural differences and the contribution of culture for sustainable development and cohesion.
- Build and improve education facilities that are sensitive to children, the physically challenged and gender. Also, provide a conducive and accommodating learning environment for all.
- Rapidly expand globally the opportunities of scholarships for developing countries for higher education including technical and vocational training, information and technology, scientific and engineering.
- Rapidly increase the supply of qualified teachers, even though transnational cooperation for teacher education in developing countries.

## **CONSTRAINTS TO THE REALIZATION OF THE EDUCATION AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COHESION IN NIGERIA**

The education policy of Nigeria appears very good and impeccable on paper but, it suffers several drawbacks. The drawbacks include: poor funding, poor management, corruption, poor teacher quality, infrastructural decay, poor salaries among others.

### **Poor Funding**

The problem of poor funding of education in Nigeria cannot be over flogged. This is owing to the level of reckless negligence in the area of funding that education suffers in Nigeria. The state of poor funding of education in Nigeria is quite alarming, pathetic and disheartening. UNESCO (2005) prescribed at least 26% of a country's budget should be allocated to education. However, the budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria is less than 9% (Ibenegbu, 2018). This figure is abysmally low, making poor funding a monster facing the education system.

## **Poor Management**

In no doubt, finance is one of the life-wires of policy attainment or implementation. Nonetheless, management (an organized structure in place and having individuals to coordinate activities) is of huge importance. Even if there is availability of funds, without skilled persons to manage the resources and system, there will still be a problem. Nigeria suffers from the problem of poor management because; the management teams perform below expectation. Money on its own cannot work but people make use of money and other resources to achieve organizational goals.

## **Corruption**

More often than not, the meager funds provided for education are pitilessly embezzled by both government officials and education managers. This problem of corruption is also obvious in cases where students “pay in cash or in kind” to earn good grades. This is one great injustice that affects not just the education sector but the country at large. The word corruption is a very familiar term to an average Nigerian. Most people who handle public offices see it as an opportunity to take their share of the national cake. This attitude is occasioned by greed and selfishness. According to Transparency International, Nigeria still remains one of the most corrupt nations in the world. Following the Corruption Perception Index, Nigeria was ranked 148th out of 180 nations. Many individuals handling development plans are self-centered including government officials and contractors handling development projects. Huge funds are approved too often for projects which are either not executed or are substandard and the funds embezzled.

## **Infrastructural Decay**

The problem of infrastructural decay is another serious problem the Nigerian state is grappling within the education sector. A lot of schools and academic facilities are in deplorable condition. Some of these facilities are death traps. However, the political will to curb this problem is more or less lacking.

## **Poor Teacher Qualification**

It is amazing and interesting to ask students or even pupils if they wish to be teachers. The response is quite embarrassing, as they vehemently show their disdain to the so called noble profession. Owing to the unattractive nature of the teaching profession in Nigeria, people do not want to be teachers. As a result, there is a drought of qualified persons to take up the teaching appointments. Some individuals come into the teaching profession as a last resort, in order to get a job. Those who teach do not give in their best. Qualified persons or graduates including trained teachers do not want to take up teaching jobs. They look for jobs in other areas where they consider lucrative. The teaching job is a last resort for them, owing to the scarcity of employment opportunity.

### **Poor Salaries of Education Workers**

The policy on education in Nigeria will keep being a mirage as long as the salaries of education workers remain poor. The policy on education cannot be implemented and the standard of education cannot improve if nothing is done to arrest the situation. These, teachers because of poor salaries are not interesting in giving their best services as they are discouraged. Consequently, they seek other means to augment their poor salaries

### **Poor Data Collection**

For sustainable development to take place there must be a plan on ground. Good plans are not made blindly but with concrete data with which to decide and make detailed arrangements in advance. However, poor data collection is an impediment to development in Nigeria. We have an avoidable and appalling culture of poor data collection and record keeping. A well organized population census is a veritable tool for a proper development plan. The figures derived from the census should guide the government to effectively plan for the development of the nation but, these figures are manipulated by individuals for political gains. Furthermore, facilities and professional manpower are needed for proper collection and analysis but these are grossly inadequate, this hampers the effectiveness of the agencies of government like the Bureau of Statistics in producing accurate results. Nigeria is bedeviled with poor record keeping, poor data collection and the inability to conduct a proper population census.

### **Conflict between Different Levels of Government**

Apart from the disruption of national development as a result of incompatibility of objectives between the Federal and State governments, there is another pathetic dimension of this problem. Conflicts resulting from political affiliations have deprived a lot of states from getting their correct monthly allocation from the federal government as at when due. A state having a party different from the ruling party at the centre is sometimes seen as an enemy of the ruling party. To punish and assert authority over such a state, the federal government sometimes withholds the allocation due the state at the slightest misunderstanding. This is an impediment to national development because; it hampers states from embarking on developmental projects when they should. This is a pity and sorry situation that should stop if even development must take place in Nigeria.

### **Change of Public Office Holders**

Owing to the periodic change of governments in Nigeria, change of public office holders has become a reoccurring decimal. Especially in cases where incumbent office holders are in a different party from the incoming government, they are replaced. This replacement goes beyond the office holders themselves but, projects of the replaced or changed government are more often than not abandoned and new ones are started. This does not only impede development but, it results to waste of resources.

## **Inadequate Planning Professionals and Institutions**

The different tiers of government constitute planning and development committees. For instance, the Federal Economic Team, Joint Planning Board, Conference of Ministers /Commissioners for Economic Planning and National Planning Commission. Most of the constituents of these committees are not development or planning professionals. This means that, they cannot make optimum input because they do not have the adequate training required for the task.

## **Inadequate Information**

Even when the masses are interested in the state of affairs in the country, they are not adequately informed by the government. Since most of the plans on development are not made public, citizens and the private sector cannot contribute their quota to the development plan (Dinim, 2018)

## **Illiteracy**

Illiteracy is one serious challenge Nigeria is grappling with. Majority of her citizens are unable to read and write as a result, they lack knowledge and information. A man that is not informed is deformed, this also holds true to a nation. A nation with high illiteracy rate is a deformed (underdeveloped) nation. Aslam (2016) posits that, in the world, countries with high literacy (educated) rate, enjoy stable economy or are developed with a high GDP. What this obviously means is that countries with a high illiteracy rate have issues with their economies and level of development and their GDP is nothing near high.

## **Ethnic and Cultural Diversity**

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nation. Inherent in a people's culture is their religion. As a matter of fact, one fundamental element of culture is religion. A particular ethnic group has a specific culture attached with a particular religion. The interplay of these factors among the ethnic groups that make up Nigeria has impeded development. Members of a specific ethnic group are first loyal to their ethnicity rather than the nation. Many Nigerians more often than not, are loyal to people from their ethnic group in government or other public offices. These loyalists are favoured by their people over people from a different ethnic group. This is a serious threat to national cohesion.

## **Structural Imbalance**

Nigeria is fifty eight years old as an independent country and only the North (northerners) has ruled the country for forty one years (Sahara Reporters, 2017). There is serious structural imbalance in the country. The North enjoys more political powers in Nigeria more than the other parts of the country. This is a nightmarish injustice. No nation can be at peace when a particular ethnic group enjoys such undue advantage over others. In an independent nation like Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, some ethnic groups are still denigrated as minorities. Although the national wealth and the main stream of the nation's economy (crude) come from there, they are derogatorily maligned as minorities meaning, of less in importance. The term minority as it



refers to a people is offensive and should be expunged from the national vocabulary of Nigeria. For peace to reign and in the spirit of promoting national development and cohesion, the imbalance should be corrected.

### **Revenue Allocation**

When it comes to the issue of revenue allocation, the states in Nigeria do not receive equal allocation, for instance; the north receives more allocation more than other parts of the country. This may be because, they have more local governments. This causes ill feelings from people from other parts of the country. This is a big obstacle to national cohesion.

### **Religious Fanatism**

In recent years, Nigeria has experienced a high level of religious fanaticism, people of a particular religion attack people of the other religion and appraisal attacks also take place. This has degenerated to terrorism to the point that suicide bombings have become rampant in the country. Religious fanatics are loyal to people of their religion and they favour them. This threatens togetherness in Nigeria. Agitations have arisen from members of the other religions who feel cheated or mistreated. The result is incessant religious clashes in the country.

### **Youth restiveness**

An idle mind they say is the devil's workshop. Most youths are not meaningfully engaged, they are idle. Although, many of them are willing and able to work but, they remain unemployed. These hungry youths have decided to take their destiny in their hands by fighting for survival in a violent way. The unemployment is caused by self-centered politicians, who as well manipulate the youths for their political interests, to cause chaos making the country tensed.

### **Nepotism**

Nepotism has a semblance with tribalism. People in positions of authority tend to favour their relatives more than others. The favour comes in the award of contracts, admissions, employment just to mention a few. This causes acrimony because those who are not favoured are forced to fight the system which they see as unjust.

### **Political polarization**

Nigeria as a country has been polarized politically along party lines. Though Nigeria practices a multiparty system, members of the different political parties are antagonistic to one another. The interest of the nation and welfare of the citizens are traded for party interest. National interest is sacrificed on the altar of party interest, to benefit a few also on the altar of party interest, to benefit a few.

## **PROSPECTS FOR THE REALIZATION OF THE EDUCATION AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND COHESION IN NIGERIA**

The three paramount factors that determine the survival of any country are: the political stability of that country, the economic conditions of that country and the educational quality and provision of that particular country. Since the attainment of independence in 1960, Nigeria has been experiencing instability in her political atmosphere, the economy is begging for resuscitation. Education remains the hope to save Nigeria from complete collapse (Okeje, 1986). However, dampened teachers' morale and inadequate support for education system in Nigeria are monsters attacking the system of education in the country (Agi & Adiele, 2015). Nonetheless, sustainable national development and cohesion can be achieved with the efficacies of the education agenda.

### **Education as a Tool for National Policy**

Nations around the globe have engaged the potency of education as a tool for national policy. For instance, in the ancient state of Sparta, education was utilized for the basic function of churning out warrior citizens to militarily guard the state. While in the democratic state of Athens, the education system emphasized on the development of the intellect or intellectual development of her citizens. Furthermore, Japan utilized her education system as a tool for national policy. The virtues of benevolence, propriety, justice, intelligence and fidelity were instilled in their citizens.

Importantly, Nigeria can utilize education as a veritable tool for national policy. The development and national cohesion of Nigeria is hugely dependent on the educational provisions of her education system. The second national development plan puts forward five major objectives, the objectives have also been adopted as a foundation for the National Policy on Education, which are building:

- A free and democratic Nigeria;
- A just and egalitarian Nigeria;
- An integrated or united strong and self-reliant Nigeria;
- A tremendous great and dynamic economy; and
- A bright environment full of opportunities for all citizens.

From the foregoing, Nigeria should deliberately make use of education as a tool for:

- The development and inculcation of national consciousness;
- The propagation of self-reliance;
- The indoctrination of a sense of discipline;
- The restoration of moral values and the dignity of mankind;
- The development of human capital;
- Encouragement of technological innovation; and
- A link for social reconstruction.

## **EDUCATION FOR FOSTERING AND TRANSMITTING NATIONAL IDEOLOGY**

One of the greatest challenges Nigeria is facing as a nation is the mindset of her citizenry. The quality of a man is determined by his level of reasoning (mindset), “as a man thinketh in his heart so is he”. Ideologies move and govern the world. An Ideology is a motivating force and a strong drive for any nation but, Nigeria does not really seem to have a national ideology. There is an unpleasant phrase, ‘the Nigerian factor’.

The insinuation of this is that, nothing works well in the country. This is an indication of the attitude of most Nigerians; this is a reflection of the problem of drought of a national ideology. The effort for national development and cohesion in Nigeria should begin with a battle for the minds of the citizenry. There should be a crystal clear ideology of who we are what we want and where we are going. The government agency and the civil society linked to national orientation and information should get to work. The orientation should cut across cultural and ideological borders. Education is the most potent tool to achieve this feat.

Nigeria as a country is not founded on any known or popular national ideology; this is one of the greatest problems we are having. On paper, Nigeria has chosen a democratic, egalitarian, self- reliant and productive nation. The next thing to do is to come up with an ideology that will actualize these ends. It is apparently the function of education to indoctrinate and adopt the basic values of the ideology. Nigeria is in a serious need of national ideology which will set us up for national development and cohesion.

### **Education Quality**

- To inculcate permanent literacy and ability to communicate effectively.
- To lay a good basis for scientific and reflective thinking
- To make use of citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of society.
- To mould and develop good attitude and morals in children.
- To develop in every child, the ability to adapt to the changing environment.
- To provide the child opportunity for developing manipulative skills that will help him function effectively in society within the limits of the child’s capacity.
- To provide the child with the primary tools for further educational advancement in terms of enrolment (FGN, 2004).

However, education in Nigeria is in trivial. Thus, the quality of education needs to be improved upon. Nigeria has experienced a commendable expansion in the establishment of education institutions especially with the approval of private universities. Nonetheless, there is a difference between an institution (a school) and the quality of education that can be acquired from that institution. Silberman in Ukeje (1986) aptly stated that, there is a difference between schooling and education. What is needed for sustainable national development and cohesion is not mass or popular schooling but mass education.

The introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in September 1976 came with its attendant challenges. The challenges include: inadequate supply of classrooms, inadequate supply of teaching materials and equipment, inadequate supply of teachers. Ukeje (1986) observed that, since the introduction of the UPE, everything linked to sound education,

apart from the learners themselves, has been in short supply. Schools in the country exist without the necessary human and material resources; qualified teachers are unemployed because, the government cannot pay their salaries. Even the employed teachers, are owed salaries sometimes for months. These have led to the decline or dwindle of the standard or quality of education in Nigeria. What Nigeria needs for sustainable development and national cohesion is not schooling but quality education. A nation cannot be better than the quality of education it prides.

### **Education as a Vehicle for Self-Reliance**

No nation can develop completely depending on other nations for everything. Nigeria as a nation needs the ability, effort and commitment to be technologically self-reliant. This deals with industrialization. I am yet to see a developed country which consumes and does not produce. The nation falls below a manufacturing country. If Nigeria must develop, she must manufacture what she consumes and consume what she manufactures. That is, Nigeria should depend on her human, abundant natural resources and technical know-how in solving her basic problems.

The advocacy is not a discouragement for interdependence but it is an appeal for the eradication of shameless and total dependence on other nations. The Nigerian education system should be structured in such a way that, it will be oriented towards the development of skills, productivity and creativity. The creation of an indigenous technology through education to solve our basic and indigenous problems will set Nigeria for development. The Shinto Philosophy and Ethics based education gave Japan the impetus to attain self-reliance and technological advancement. The platform for self-reliance in technology was set in Japan by the Meiji Restoration. This made the reformation of Japan's education system possible, which led to the development of her indigenous technology and her ultimate development and self-reliance. Nigeria can borrow a lift from that.

### **Education for Social Discipline**

The introduction of the War Against Indiscipline in Nigeria by the Buhari and Idiagbon's regime goes a long way to tell of the level of indiscipline exhibited by Nigerians. Traffic rules and regulations are disobeyed at will, taxes are not paid by many Nigerian corporations, in some cases when they are paid, they are not paid correctly and as at when due. Elections are rigged with huge impunity, examination malpractice is now a fashion in the education system and embezzlement by public office holders is almost a welcome practice in Nigeria. Impunity has become a popular word in the country because, it is like a garment worn by the government and citizens alike, and corruption has become a national chorus. Indiscipline has eaten deep into the social fabric of the country, and there is urgent need to salvage the system of this menace. Justice in the country can be tele-guided or manipulated by the high and mighty, nepotism and tribalism are common practices in the nation.

Education remains an effective and efficient way to tackle this problem of indiscipline in the Nigerian society. Through education, the right attitudes, values and behavioural pattern necessary for national development can be inculcated in the citizenry. Education brings about enlightenment which produces the inner drive to behave properly.

## **Education for National Cohesion**

One of the greatest problems fighting against national cohesion in Nigeria is sectionalism. This deals with excessive concern and support for the interests of a group to the detriment of the others and the whole country. This enormous monster must be nipped in the bud, if Nigeria truly desires to experience sustainable national development and cohesion. There is a serious outcry and lamentation of marginalization. When a president emerges, people from other ethnic groups different from the president's, lament for being marginalized and sidelined from the scheme of things in the nation. The cry for being marginalized by the various groups in Nigeria is an apparent evidence of the monster called sectionalism. This is a problem pulling down; the much desired national cohesion needed for the unity, peace and progress in Nigeria.

Nigeria may be a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious country but, those are not the actual problems of the country. The real problem is the inequality propagated by the leaders and strongly supported by the followers in the Nigerian society. There can never be peace in a diverse country where a section of the country will be neglected for too long. Peace, stability and national cohesion will be very far from any country if a section is deprived of access to social amenities and due opportunities. However, education is the potent force that can destroy the problem of sectionalism and build the right attitude in citizens. This function can be properly handled by education for national cohesion. National cohesion can become a reality with the utilization of education to inculcate patriotism and national consciousness among the citizenry. People can be encouraged to be loyal to Nigeria first, rather than being loyal to their ethnic groups. It is with the weapon of education the monster of sectionalism can be defeated.

## **Education for Competent Leadership**

Achebe (1983) opined that, the trouble with Nigeria is nothing else but, simply and squarely a failure of leadership. Leadership goes beyond occupying a position of authority. It is the ability to rightly guide, direct and coordinate a group with available resources to achieve the desired objectives or set goals and ameliorate that group. No group and no agenda can succeed without competent leadership.

There is an abnormality in the land that is accepted. The constitution of leadership in Nigeria is recklessly abnormal. It is in Nigeria a professor will play second fiddle or deputize a secondary school certificate holder. Nigeria is faced with the problem of leadership incompetence. Many of those in positions of authority do not have the relevant competence to navigate the affairs of their offices. Many of those with the competence are not in positions of authority. Nigerians should borrow a lift from Ghana, which has been producing professors as presidents. The revival of the Ghanaian economy is not a mystery but, it is a result and function of the competence of the leadership. Education is the answer to churn out competent national leaders and leaders at all levels (Ukeje, 1986).

## **Education for Building National Consciousness and Identity**

This encourages and instills a shared understanding that the people in the nation share common linguistic and national identity. For instance the English language is one common lingua franca in Nigeria. Other national symbols or identities include: the national anthem, the national pledge,

the national passport, the Nigeria flag, national currency among others, and establishment of detribalized academic institutions, such as, unity schools and other federal government institutions. This should be done for the purpose of promoting national cohesion in Nigeria. Such institutions were established to cater for children, youth and adults from different parts of the country, irrespective of their religion, ethnic and cultural affiliations. These schools should be adequately funded and managed to meet the purpose they were established. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme should be revamped to achieve its intended purpose of fostering integration among people from different religions, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The NYSC programme was established in 1973 by the federal government of Nigeria to build cohesion among graduates from different institutions who come together to serve their father land and appreciate the Nigerian diversity.

Individuals should be able to tolerate others not minding their ethnicity, religion or cultural differences. Citizens should be taught and encouraged to be hospitable showing warmth and interest for others. There should be a discouragement of discrimination and an encouragement of inter-ethnic marriages. This will go a long way to build national consciousness and identity in Nigeria (Technology Transformation Education).

Appreciation of public holidays that is, making the celebration, identity or religion of other ethnic groups to be appreciated. For instance, the Christmas should be observed and appreciated by the Muslims and the Salah holidays for the Muslims should also be observed and appreciated by the Christians.

Irrespective of religious, cultural, ethnic and political affiliations, we share a lot in common and we have symbols that affirm that we are one people. All the points stated as ways of realizing sustainable national development and cohesion can only be achieved through the efficacy of education. Thus, education still remains a useful instrument to realize sustainable development and national cohesion in Nigeria.

### **Upgrade of Salaries of Education Workers**

The salaries of education workers should be upgraded. The importance of motivation of workers in the education sector cannot be over accentuated. The ill treatment of education workers should stop. It is for this pathetic treatment that other professionals like medical doctors, lawyers and others are better treated than teachers. People see the teaching profession as a selfless one; as a result they see teachers' demand for better pay as selfish. This is very unfair and a great injustice not just to teachers but the nation at large. Whether or not we agree, the poor salaries of education workers affect the citizens and every sector of the nation. The government and other stakeholders in the education sector should wake up from their dream. Without the improvement or upgrade of salaries of education workers, the realization of the education agenda for national development will be nothing but a first class mirage.

### **Proper Management**

The right management teams should be put in place to manage or coordinate the activities of the education sector. The policies on education are good but, without the right structure in place and the qualified personnel, implementation of the policies will hit the rocks.

## **Adequate Funding of Education**

The uninterested of the Nigerian government in the education sector is obvious. The evidence is the reckless disregard of the sector as a result of the lack of political will on the part of politicians to better the sector. Adequate funds should be pumped into the education sector as a matter of urgency. This will consequently cushion the effect of the deplorable state of education facilities and help in the overhaul of the entire education system.

## **Patriotism/good governance**

Corruption arises as a result of bad governance and the unpatriotic mindset of citizens. These citizens see public office as an opportunity and open door to take their own share of the national cake. Consequently, they embezzle public funds without any form of pity for the nation or the citizens.

Government and stakeholders in the education sector should see every public office as an immortal privilege to serve the nation and humanity. Funds or resources meant for the nation especially, for the education sector, should be prudently channeled to the sector to realize the education agenda for sustainable development and national cohesion.

## **CONCLUSION**

Most multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural countries in the world are characterized by contentions and power tussle between or among the ethnic groupings. Thus, Nigeria is not an exception. Nonetheless, with understanding and the right attitude of the citizenry, Nigeria can be managed. The right attitude, understanding and values to help in realization of sustainable national development and cohesion can only be achieved with the utilization of the weapon of education.

Behind every invention is knowledge, and at the root of every knowledge is education. In other words, no meaningful development and integration can take place without the utilization of education. Education remains a potent weapon with which to destroy the little foxes (challenges) attempting to destroy the vine (Nigeria). These challenges such as: sectionalism, leadership incompetence, corruption, nepotism among others, can be nipped in the bud with the instrumentality of education. However, no country or society can experience significant development in an atmosphere of consistent contention, negative conflicts and violence. There is a strong correlation between development and cohesion, no matter how wealthy a country is and no matter how competent its leadership, in an atmosphere of violence nothing will work. Education remains the most potent weapon to realize sustainable national development and entrench national cohesion for a democratic, egalitarian, united, self-reliant, dynamic economy and an environment full of opportunities for all Nigerian citizens.

## **Suggestions**

- The Nigerian society should ensure compulsory quality and free education for all children. This will lead to effective and relevant learning outcomes;

- The Nigerian education curricula should include technical and vocational education. This will provide the nation with the requisite manpower that will develop an industrialized Nigeria;
- The relevant skills needed in the contemporary world should be acquired by youth and adults for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship;
- Education facilities should be built, upgraded and made safe for effective learning environments;
- The Nigerian government and other stakeholders in the education system should increase the employment of qualified teachers, and partnership through international cooperation for training of teachers and other professionals in developing countries;
- Leaders should adopt and operate an inclusive style of leadership. This will put to rest the problem of nepotism and contention and entrench national cohesion;
- Links between and among ethnic groups should be strengthened among ethnic groups with cultural diversity;
- National festivals in relation with national events should be organized annually to encourage and foster national cohesion;
- Develop an innovative and contemporary approach of teaching and to engage the changes prompted by inventions;
- The Nigerian government with the support of the private sector and well-meaning Nigerians should ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills that are needed for the promotion of sustainable development, through education for sustainable behavioural pattern, human rights, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence and appreciation of cultural diversity;
- Ensure that teaching of citizenship education at all levels of education to inculcate patriotism, tolerance and the right values in the citizenry, is made compulsory.

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