

## **SUSTAINING NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA THROUGH SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*It is no doubt that Nigeria is a land full of great opportunities. These opportunities are yet to be harnessed amidst highly innovative and creative minds. Secondary education in Nigeria is a bridge linking primary and tertiary education which is of strategic importance in harnessing various opportunities. Even in the contemporary Nigeria good secondary education certification had been an acceptable qualification for various jobs in the military, industries, factories and offices. Also, many successful entrepreneurs have become successful and in turn becoming employers of labor. This paper focused on the need to ensure a stable and viable nation through secondary education by preparing youths for future responsibility of building a strong, united and economically viable nation thus, leading to national integration and development.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Secondary Education, National Integration and Development*

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### **Article History**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is essential for national integration and development. It is crystal clear that the nature and standard of the education framework and the ability to innovate determine development and advancement of any nation. One of the major recognized tools for promoting the cultural, socio-economic, and political development is education (Ehinola, 2016). Hence it is imperative for any nation to invest in the education of their citizen thereby giving a foundation and impel valid and sustainable national integration and development (Chukwumerije, 2013 in Ugwu, 2015). This will help in producing good and useful individuals that will contribute meaningfully to national development which is the primary aim of education.

Secondary education is very essential and unique considering its impact to the nation. Significant choices of options are carefully made at this level for essential accomplishment of long-range ambition. It absorbs products of primary education, hence a link between primary and tertiary education. In Nigeria, the secondary education is divided into two tier system – the junior secondary school and the senior secondary school with each tier covering three years.

### **The Objective of Secondary Education in Nigeria Includes the Following**

- Provision of higher level educational opportunities to school leavers irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background;

- Offer a diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles;
- Provide a trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at the sub-professional grades;
- Provide technical, entrepreneurial, and vocational skills necessary for self-reliance, and for commercial, industrial, agricultural and economic development;
- Develop and promote the Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage;
- Inspire its student with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence;
- Foster national unity with emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity; and
- Raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the view and feelings of others, appreciate the dignity of labour and respect those values specified under our broad national goals and live as good citizens (NPE, 2013)

For these set objectives and goals to be achieved, there is need for effective planning and optimum utilization of resources in translating them into reality.

### **60 Years after Independence**

One of the vestiges of imperialism and colonialism in Nigeria, a nation of many ethnic nationalities is the contemporary political, economic and social settings. Though the educational system was alien, intensive education in western values was witnessed in the country to a level that individuals considered anything original to their culture was inferior and uncivilized (Ojerinde, 2011). Furthermore, he noted that it was challenging and demanding for British colonial masters to instill western values in the elites, this, to a large extent is responsible for the personal and internal conflicts among Nigerians.

Despite the freshness of political practice in Nigeria, a plethora of political differences, ethnic distrust and religious intolerance bedeviled the nation. In the words of former President Obasanjo, the nation, Nigeria is a 'contraption teetering on the brink of total collapse'. Presently, there are upheavals by various groups such as the Independent People of Biafra, Oodua Action Movement, Arewa People's Congress etc. The activities of some of these associations have become a threat to national integration and development. Other issues include the rising increase in kidnapping, cyber and drug related crime, armed robbery, pipe vandalism, corruption, among others.

Also, the dwindling state of our social and economic infrastructure especially the health and education sector, road networks and public corporation is alarming. They reflect our failed political system and a defective political culture. All these amidst other factors have hampered the national integration and development of our nation.

It is no doubt that Nigeria is a land full of great opportunities. These opportunities are yet to be harnessed amidst highly innovative and creative minds. Therefore, there is need to ensure a stable and viable nation through secondary education by preparing youths for future responsibility of building a strong, united and viable nation thus, leading to national integration and development. The utilization of the curriculum/subjects (Core subjects, Science and mathematics, Technology, Humanities, Business studies, and 34 Trade/Entrepreneurship subjects) offered to significantly bring about radical change towards technological and economic advancement in sustaining national integration and development.

### **Brief History of Secondary Education in Nigeria**

The beginning of modern education in Nigeria could be traced to 1842 with the coming of the first Christian Missionary educators. The primary motive of these missionaries was to fulfill their missionary obligations.

The colonial overlords did not have and /or display any interest in the education of the natives between 1842 and 1882 (Oni, 2006). This explains why the missions had a monopoly of the administration of secondary education system as each school within some missions, used its own discretion as to what to teach the learners.

Although the missionaries first set their foot at Badagry, no secondary school was established until 1859 when Rev. Thomas Babington Macaulay of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) founded the first ever secondary school, the C.M.S Grammar School.

Graduates of C.M.S Grammar school were employed as clerks. Also the school supplied recruits to companies (Adesina, 1977, P.4; Taiwo, 1980, pp. 12,13; Adesina & Ogunsaju, 1984, pp.i,1; Oni, 2006, pp. 26). The first secondary school aimed at producing graduates who would never compete with the colonial masters, thus produced people who could do menial jobs such as clerks, artisans, helpers, and interpreters for British officials. Therefore school curriculum was not designed to emancipate the Nigerians from enslavement (Fafunwa, 1974).

No secondary school was established by the colonial overlords until Kings College Lagos was founded in 1909 and Queen's College in 1923. Subsequently, few secondary school were established due to increasing demand by notable Nigerians who received post-secondary education outside the country who knew the benefits of education. Their agitation contributed to the rapid growth of secondary education in Nigeria (Taiwo, 1982). Subjects that were of little or no significance to the traditions and aspirations of the people were introduced for Nigerians (Fafunwa, 1974, Taiwo, 1982; Osokoya, 1987; Molagun, 2006).

Secondary grammar school was the type of secondary education that was operational in Nigeria for about ninety years (Oni 2006, PP.57). Just like the English grammar school, students wrote the same Oxford and Cambridge examinations as their counterparts in Britain.

In the year 1955, Secondary Modern Schools, another type of secondary education came into limelight in the Western Region. This type of secondary education was less expensive for parents who could not afford the high fees of grammar school and also designed to accommodate student overflow. Successful students either further education/studies at any technical institute, trade center, teacher training college or seek junior posts in industrial enterprises, civil service, and commercial organization.

There was a reduction in the duration of secondary grammar school education from six (6) to five (5) years. Students who successfully complete the programme could go on to the sixth form, a two year programme for the higher school certificate.

Candidates who pass the higher school certificate or general certificate in education in either two or three subjects would have direct entry admission into the university. A commercial school is another type of secondary education which was equivalent to the grammar school. Successful completers of the programme who pass the West African Examination council could go to the training school for office secretaries in the civil service or seek jobs in industrial and commercial organizations.

Between the 1950's and 1980, few secondary technical vocational schools existed in the eastern part of the country. It's curriculum was tailored towards satisfying the needs of the industry. The curriculum conference of 1969 was a turning point in the secondary education as well as Nigerian education system at large as it was an offshoot of the National Policy on Education which was designed to meet the aspiration of Nigerians.

### **Role of Secondary Education in National Integration and Development**

Having explained the concept of secondary education, it is important to define development and national development. There is no universal definition of development. For Igweh (2001), development is seen as a reduction in the rate of unemployment, poverty, income inequality and illiteracy. In the view of Achimugu (2000), development is the level to which a nation is able to control various cultural, political and socio-economic issues for the purpose of progressive change in the standard of living of her citizens. This was affirmed by Ehinola (2016), who posited that development refers to quality in the standard of living and economic growth.

National development is a blue print set up by the government such as quality changes in the political and socio-economic sector and growth in production or output. It includes effective and valuable changes which enhances the standard of living of citizens through job creation, low poverty rate, and equality in opportunities (Dike, 2008). According to Udeh (2010) in Ehinola (2016), the focus of national development is to quantify the level of earning, savings and investment in production firms, infrastructure, goods and services. Therefore the aim of national development is to promote freedom, peace, and development. It is a continuous improvement in socio-economic life of the citizens as well as other sectors of the nation.

National integration tries to fuse various ethnic groups into one. It is a process that attempts to eliminate the presence of small nationalities with the feeling of oneness (Alapiki, 2000; Farinde, 2016). This could be achieved through inculcating and assimilating the spirit of oneness in individuals. Assimilation process has failed in the providing helpful methods of integration in Africa (Alapiki, 1998; Farinde, 2016). This gives possible reasons for various cultures that exists among nationalities and bounded by common interest and respect (Ibaba, 2007).

Based on the foregoing, it can be deduced that the goals and objectives of national development is towards enhancing every aspect of an individual's life. Since national development is a short or long term goal, which is achievable and aimed at improving every sector of the nations' economy, secondary education plays a role. This role includes:

- According to the national policy on education, secondary education is aimed at developing and promoting cultural linkages through Nigerian languages. Thus, students at the secondary school level should offer at least one Nigerian language in order to ensure continuity and sustenance of national culture.
- Innovative and creative minds of students can be developed if the secondary school curriculum is fully implemented. The trade and entrepreneurial skills, if fully implemented will help reduce the level of unemployment among secondary school leavers leading to a rise in national development.
- Moral training which integrates or unities individuals across culture should be emphasized in line with the National Policy on Education which categorically states that that secondary school education is aimed at developing individuals who are well adjusted and morally upright. Desire sustainable development can be enhanced through education (Olatunde et al, 2016). Umoh, (2005) sees education and sustainable development as two side of a coin, hence they are inseparable. For Olatunde et al (2016), both concepts are interwoven, interconnected, and intertwined.

### **Secondary Education Curriculum as a veritable tool for Sustainable National Integration in Nigeria**

One of the major functions of education in any society is producing a generation with relevant knowledge and skills needed for maintaining the society thus, ensuring social stability. It is a vehicle for economic and societal reforms of any nation. The National policy on education has proved governments' commitment towards providing a relevant secondary education. In order to achieve the stated goals and objective of secondary education in Nigeria, the Federal Government of Nigeria designed a functional curriculum which consists of the following groups: Core subjects, Science and mathematics, Technology, Humanities, Business studies, and 34 Trade/Entrepreneurship subjects. They are detailed as follows:

#### **Core Subjects**

- Mathematics
- English
- Civic Education

#### **Science and Mathematics**

- Chemistry
- Further Mathematics
- Biology
- Physics
- Agriculture
- Health Education
- Computer Studies
- Physical Education.

#### **Technology**

- Technical Drawing
- Basic Electricity
- General metal work
- Electronics
- Building Constructions
- Auto Mechanics
- Wood-working
- Food and Nutrition

- Home Management
- Clothing and Textiles.

### **Humanities**

- Nigerian languages
- Literature in English
- Geography
- History
- Government
- Christian Religious Studies
- Islamic Studies
- Music
- Visual Arts
- French
- Arabic
- Economics.

### **Business Studies**

- Accounting
- Office Practice
- Insurance
- Commerce
- Store Management

### **Outside the Fields of Studies, 34 Trade or Entrepreneurship Subjects are Also Included. These Subjects Include**

- Auto Electrical work
- Auto Body repair and spray painting
- Auto Mechanical work
- Air Conditioning Refrigerator
- Auto Parts Merchandising
- Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work
- Welding & Fabrication Engineering craft practice

- Block-laying, Brick-laying and Concrete work
- Radio, TV and Electrical work
- Machine Wood-working
- Plumbing and Pipe-fitting
- Painting and Decorating
- Furniture Making
- Carpentry and Joinery
- Catering and Craft Practice
- Upholstery
- Textile trade
- Garment Making
- Printing Craft Practice
- Dyeing and Bleaching
- Leather Goods Manufacturing and Repair
- Cosmetology
- Data Processing
- Stenography
- Book Keeping
- Store Keeping
- Photography
- GSM Maintenance & Repair
- Mining
- Tourism
- Fisheries
- Animal Husbandry
- Salesmanship
- Marketing (NPE, 2013 p.12-14)

## **Importance of Vocational Education at the Secondary School level in Sustaining National Integration and Development**

The significance of vocational education in sustaining national integration and development cannot be over emphasized. Thus, among other benefits, vocational education provides the acquisition of skills for self-reliance for future benefits to individuals. This was affirmed by Adeyemi & Nwosu (2010) who posited that vocational education is a lifelong educational achievement which helps in the identification, encouragement, building and advancement of scientific and technological talents of students at the secondary education level.

Vocational education helps average students to have easy access to science and technological related materials. It equally helps student who are unable to cope with academics acquire skillful knowledge that will make them relevant and responsible individuals to the society. Individuals are trained to be self-reliant and become employers of labour through vocational Education (Adeyemi and Nwosu,2010).

The aim of vocational Education is to produce manpower capable of translating acquired knowledge towards solving environmental/societal problems, thus reducing the increasing rate of unemployment among youths, hence leads to economic advancement, national security and political stability. Based on the aims and objective of technical and vocational Education as outlined in the national policy on Education (2004) document, vocational education can be harnessed in producing skills at the secondary educational level capable of stimulating creativity and providing sustenance of national integration and development.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Secondary education by virtue of its position in the Nigerian education system is of strategic importance. Therefore it can be used for national integration and sustainable national development by emphasizing on those values that unites us as a people and ensuring the smooth transmission of these values. In the same vein, sustainable national integration and development can only be achieved in secondary schools if they seek to provide and implement solutions to our socio economic and political needs.

However, there are factors which are militating against the full implementation of the secondary education curriculum. These factors among others include lack of basic infrastructure in schools, inadequate funding of schools, trade and entrepreneurial subjects not offered in tertiary institutions, insufficient qualified personnel, and provision of guidance and counseling departments in schools. These among other factors can help reposition the secondary education system in achieving a sustained national integration and development.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Alternative grading system which focuses on the development of competences or non-acquisition of competences should be introduced in secondary schools. This will help in developing secondary school to be self-reliant.
- Since teaching is a profession, unqualified individuals should not be recruited into the profession. Qualified teachers should be engaged and motivated to enable them discharge their duty effectively. This will help ensure that right norms and values are disseminated and instilled into learners thus promoting national integration. Also, provisions should be made in tertiary institutions for the study of most of the trade and entrepreneurial subjects in

the secondary school curriculum. When there are trained and qualified teachers in such areas, it will help in translate the goals and objectives into reality.

- For national development to be achieved through secondary school there is urgent need to address the state of facilities in secondary schools. Dilapidated infrastructural facilities must be made functional as well as the provision of laboratories and libraries where necessary
- Proper supervision and quality control should be put in place to ensure that secondary school curriculum are implemented effectively
- There is need for proper funding of the secondary education system. Allocation of funds made available schools should be increased and expended judiciously in both federal and state level. Effective accountability measures should be put in place to sure that funds are expended on approved projects.
- Guidance and counseling departments should be made available in all schools to help youths grow into useful citizens.
- Periodic review of secondary school curriculum must be ensured to make it responsive to contemporary social, political and economic challenges.

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