



MANAGING SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL COHESION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: *Education as the cardinal pillar in the development of individuals, Communities, societies and nations, should serve to enable individual, communities, societies and nations to achieve their needs and aspirations. One of such needs in Nigeria, which has remained largely elusive is national cohesion. Various researchers conducted locally and internationally, have revealed that education contributes to development of social capital by increasing the individual's propensity to trust and be tolerant, which are components of national cohesion. Learning which is central to education and secondary education in particular is a social activity that has a strong influence on the development of shared norms and values placed on tolerance and understanding within a community or nation which paves way for national cohesion. Unarguably, certain essential leadership and administrative skills are required of the principals who are the leaders and administrators of the secondary education system if secondary education will achieve national cohesion. This study therefore aimed at relating effective management of secondary education with the attainment of national cohesion in Nigeria. Concepts of national cohesion, secondary education in Nigeria and management of secondary education for national cohesion were expounded. It was concluded that if secondary education is effectively managed can foster national cohesion in Nigeria.*

Keynote: *Managing, Secondary Education and National Cohesion.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is an intentional and purposeful activity geared towards the achievement of knowledgeable individuals who are able to think wisely, the formation of a sustainable community and realization of economic goals, benefiting both individuals and their communities. Education, therefore has set of rules or standards of behaviour that should be transmitted to the learners intentionally to enhance national cohesion, if effectively managed. This entails that there are standards of behaviours and values that education and secondary education in particular should intentionally seek to achieve in order to attain national cohesion. According to

Balogun (2010), education is the light without which the world will be in darkness and chaos. According to Plato cited in Aguba (2006), education is virtue and the purpose of education is morality and usefulness to one's society. Undoubtedly, education is therefore a valuable instrument in the production of human capital resources of a nation. Dunga (2011) defined education as the aggregate of all the processes through which a child develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value society. Therefore, the focus of education is to equip the individuals with knowledge, abilities, skills and other forms of behavior to enable them function well in their immediate environment and the society at large.

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Education, in general terms, is the process of transmitting societal norms, values and desirable attitude from one generation to another. Education seeks to socialize individuals in order to equip them with the desired mode of behaviour that is in conformity with the way of life of the society in which they live. It is not arguable that secondary education in Nigeria is designed to transmit desirable values such as good work ethics, patriotism, tolerance, honesty and fairness, which are outstanding indicators for the attainment of national cohesion.

In Nigeria, secondary education is a vital link between primary education and tertiary education that determines the quality and quantity of the input into the tertiary level where higher manpower needs of the nation are produced. According to Anyaogu (2008) cited in Nsude (2015) is the cornerstone of the educational system, because it coincides with the critical period of adolescence, when important careers, desirable values, norms and life choices are made. This implies that secondary education level is the bedrock of the entire educational system where important careers, desirable values, norms and life choices are made. There is therefore the need to orientate both the principals and teachers for effective teaching process as well as proper management of this level of education. It is imperative therefore to note that education cannot be an instrument par excellence for achieving national cohesion when secondary education is not effectively managed to bring about the most desirable values, honesty, fairness, tolerance, oneness and unity.

Peretomode (2012) states that educational management is concerned with the planning and formulation of educational policies or programmes with a view to achieving educational goals. It can also mean using human effort for the coordination of available resources directed at achieving educational purpose. According to Dunga (2011) educational management involves some planning, organizing, staffing, directing, controlling, coordinating and budgeting. Educational

management is all about strategizing, planning, organization, running, governance, and supervision of the entire process of teaching and learning that takes place at all levels of the formal education system. Educational management therefore entails the process of utilizing human and materials resources, using the functions of planning, organizing, directing, leading, coordinating and controlling for achieving educational outcomes. The challenge is therefore managing secondary education effectively in order to attain the much desired national cohesion in Nigeria.

Concept of National Cohesion

Cohesion is a conscious and preparedness for divers groups of people to belong together and affirm the condition of mutual dependence. This involves construction of an integrated citizenry with a sense of belonging amongst members of different groups and regions of a country (Wafula, 2016). In the word's of Udeh (2014), cohesion means that act or state that sticks people together; it is synonymous with unity. National cohesion is therefore, the process and a product of inculcating and enabling all citizens in the country to have a sense as well as feeling that they are members of the same country, engaged in one common enterprise and facing shared challenges. It goes beyond peace-keeping and conflict management. According to Udeh (2014), national cohesion is based on the fact that societies and individuals can achieve their potential when living and working together. According to him, this is achieved through the regulation and reconciliation of differences, competing interests and demands. National cohesion is therefore central when everyone in the country has the equal opportunity, the resources and motivation to participate in society as fully as they wish and on equal basis with others. It encompasses the values of unity, equality, freedom, democracy, peace, social justice and rule of law. Atiku (2007) perceived national cohesion as a sense of unity and oneness by citizens of a country to the extent that despite their diversity, they see themselves as



forming a nation. According to him, that sense of solidarity encourages the citizens to invest economically, socially, politically and emotionally in the wellbeing of the nation. National cohesion does not mean absence of disagreement but those disagreements play out and are resolved within the parameters laid out by the country's laws and regulations and in a manner that preserves that sense of oneness.

Therefore, national cohesion can be viewed as the search for a national formula for sticking all the component groups of a nation together, but not by enforcement of it. The need for finding a common solution for ensuring and not enforcing, national cohesion through education cannot be over stated. This is further justified by the apathy and disaffection created by an over-heated political economy, resulting from the spillover of economic recession. These also created capacity under utilization in particular and unemployment in general, across the entire nation (Bello, 2016). The idea, as envisaged in this study, is that education at secondary level, could be restructured to encompass various skills and competences that could engender global competitiveness and ensure inclusion and higher productivity of secondary education graduates in Nigeria.

Restructuring Nigeria for national cohesion encompasses equal access to free and compulsory secondary education, equal employment opportunities, equal access to decision making and uninterrupted access to social welfare for all and sundry. Most advanced economies of the world operate social security system (allowances paid by the government to persons above 18 years of age and classified as unemployed youths) for the purpose of reducing the effects of hard economic downturns on youths and avoid youth restiveness. Therefore, Nigeria cannot afford to be disunited especially with the diverse ethnic setting that has been politically prejudiced. Any nation that desires sustainable growth and development, cohesion is a *sinequa non*. Therefore, it is imperative that educational managers should pursue the

objective of national tolerance and unity through, visible impact of development in the lives of their students which will engender national cohesion. However, according to Adeosun (2018), national cohesion and unity in Nigeria have suffered much set back resulting from the civil war 1967-1970, Niger-Delta terrorism, the clamor for the Republic of Biafra, Bokoharam insurgency and herdsmen attacks. Consequently, national cohesion in Nigeria, has always been subjected to question.

The secondary education system has the inherent features that bring learners of different family backgrounds, social statuses and religious inclinations together to study in the same environment. In the process of studying together, there results social integration among students in their group of friends and acquaintances. However, because the integration is personal and informal, its post-school impact is usually not effective for fostering national cohesion and unity. It is pertinent to state that the only way education could foster national cohesion is where education as a product is meaningfully accepted in the society for effective emancipation of the school products. (People who acquired the education).

However, the real life experiences, according to Ozochi (2010) is that there are people who are deprived of basic education due to religious and cultural reasons, while there are others who dropped at various levels of education. There are therefore, different forces operating within Nigerian Socio-economic environment that inhibit the influence of consistency spread of educational privileges among Nigerians. Even where education could have served as a unifying factor, certain other extraneous variables very often interfere to disenfranchise some Nigerians from acquiring education. It is therefore in the view of the authors that if educational products are evenly distributed in a country, then its unifying features for achieving national cohesion may be better perceived. Therefore, secondary education is capable of unifying the recipients if the change in the recipients is consistent, but



when some people dropped out for one reason or the other, secondary education may not accomplish its role as a unifying agent among the people of any country.

Furthermore, Ozochi (2010) stated that accelerated social, political and economic development can hardly take place when greater population of Nigerians cannot read or write. This entails that if it were possible for every Nigerians to be educated to a reasonable level, then there could be tendencies that the level of understanding and integration would be fairly consistent. But where large numbers of population are illiterates, it becomes a situation of blending and enforcing different incompatible elements to become compatible.

Nigeria as a hybrid society has various federating units tightly knitted together through market system, with goods and services moving from north to south and south to north, with prospering economic environments where market participants are at liberty to do their business anywhere in Nigeria. Therefore, Nigeria would have been a hybrid society with economic factor as the determining variants for national cohesion, but where national politics is conflated with religion, then the hybrid function would be distorted because religion is not and would neither be a unifying factor nor vehicle for national cohesion. If this is true, then blending religious matters with serious social, political and economic issues is to subjugate the interest of national unity to the whims and Caprices of religious devices. This further underpins that education is best tool for fostering national cohesion in Nigeria but it must be properly managed especially at Secondary Education level.

INDICATORS OF A COHESIVE NATION

Indicators of a cohesive nation among others include;

1. Common vision and sense of belonging.
2. Appreciation and value for people' diverse background and circumstances.
3. Peaceful co-existence among all members from diverse backgrounds.

4. Similar and equal life opportunities for every member of the society irrespective of social status, ethnicity and background.
5. Strong, positive and sustainable relationships developed between people from different backgrounds.

BENEFITS OF A COHESIVE NATION

The benefits of a cohesive nation include:

1. Building of a strong national identity.
2. Commitment to national ideals.
3. Unified approach to confronting external threats.
4. Enhanced national solidarity and harmony.
5. Promotion of equity in the sharing of national resources.
6. Improved economic performance and well-being.
7. Enhanced credibility locally and internationally and accelerates peacemaking process.

CONCEPT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education is a vital link between primary education and tertiary education and also a gate way to the labour market for those who could not for any reasons, continue into tertiary education (Nsude, 2015). According to Igwe (2012), secondary education is that level of education that usually comes immediately after primary education and before tertiary education. According to her, secondary education is also that stage at which the students are prepared for the polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Universities. Abraham and Amaechina (2011) opines that secondary education introduces children to wider world, sharpens their mind for further academic work, opens their eyes to future orientations, incorporates political, economic and social competences and literacy as well as helps to raise their intelligence. Anyaogu (2008) cited in Nsude (2015), secondary education is the cornerstone of the educational system, because it coincides with the critical period of adolescence, when important careers, and life choices are made. She went further to stress that it determines the quality and quantity of the input into the



tertiary level where higher manpower needs of the nation are produced. According to Aggarwal (2008) cited in Nsude (2015), secondary education in India is a complete unity by itself and not merely preparatory stage, that at the end of this period, the students should be in a position, if he wishes to enter into the responsibilities of life and take up some useful vocation. This position was also considered in the recent new Nigerian Secondary School Curriculum which was designed to provide not only academic studies, but also vocational, technical and entrepreneurship education as well as fostering, patriotism and security education with an emphasis on the common ties, in spite of our diversity. Furthermore, to raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect and appreciate the dignity of labour. The curriculum has therefore been enriched to ensure an integrated secondary education in which a wide range of subjects are made available to students so as to foster national cohesion and unity. The basic functions of secondary education system in Nigeria are to prepare students for useful living within the society and for high education.

According, FRN (2013) secondary education shall last for six years, broken into two distinct parts that are correlated with the ground work of first three years-Junior secondary school (JSS) dovetailing into the next three years of senior secondary school (SSS). In the specific terms, according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) the secondary education is geared towards realizing the following objectives.

- a. Provide holders of the Basic Education certificate and Junior Arabic and Islamic studies certificate with opportunity for education of a higher level. Irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background.
- b. Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, disposition, opportunities and future roles;

- c. Provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades;
- d. Provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance and for agricultural industrial, commercial and economic development.
- e. Develop and promote Nigeria languages, art and culture in the context of the world's cultural heritage;
- f. Inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence.
- g. Foster patriotism, and security education with an emphasis on the common ties, in spite of our diversity and
- h. Raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who think independently and rationally, respect and appreciate the dignity of labour (29).

From the foregoing, the aims and objectives of secondary education, make it clear that the future of any nation and its unity depends quite considerably on the quality of education it provides for its citizens. Since the quality of education received at this level is very important, there is need to properly manage secondary education for national cohesion and global competitiveness. In other words, after going through secondary education, the learner is expected to be able to contribute effectively and productively to life activities in the society and national cohesion. This effective contribution, according to Obanya (2009) cited in Nsude (2015) includes the learner's ability to use the acquired knowledge, skills, competences, values and attitudes to desire, seek, recognize and utilize available opportunity to something new, to create wealth for self and others and consequently contribute effectively to the society in the attainment of national cohesion.



SECONDARY EDUCATION AND NATIONAL COHESION IN NIGERIA

Unarguably, human development is central in bringing about national cohesion in any country of the world. The best way to appreciate the role of secondary education in enhancing national cohesion is to expound the concept of development. Development is the process of both economic, political and social transformation based on complex cultural and environmental factors and their interactions. Babalola (2013) asserts that development is concerned with the transformation of the individuals, households, communities, private as well as public institutions through building of human capacities to ensure that available resources are properly managed and directed towards societal and economic improvements. In the words of Ituma (2010), increased capacity of people to have control over material assets, intellectual resource and ideology, physical necessities of life (food, clothing and shelters), employment, equity, participation in government, political and economic, independency, adequate education, gender equality, sustainable development and peace are the indicators of development. The above indices of development, no doubt indicate how people are at the centre of development process. According to the United Nations Human Development Report (UNHDR) (2009), human development is all about putting people at the centre of development. It is also all about realizing their potential, increasing their choices and enjoying their freedom to live the lives they value.

It is imperative to state here that this new approach to development focuses more attention to measures and strategies to reduce poverty and inequality and to the realization of the potentials of human personality. Therefore, human development have become a model which focuses on empowering the individual with the worthwhile knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes to face the social challenges that may hinder his/her productivity. Unarguably, human resources is the

most essential and vital of the major resources for development because with it in place, financial, physical, information and other resources can be substantially harnessed. According to Rahji (2010) the human resources of a nation are considered to be the engine of growth and development of the country.

Harrison (2011) stated that human resources development is the process of increasing the knowledge, the skills and the capacity of all the people in the society for promoting its economic, political and social growth. Hence the role of education and indeed secondary education in bringing about human development cannot be over stated. Therefore, for the attainment of national cohesion and unity, secondary education should be properly managed and tailored to ensure that:

- a. Education does not have only academic purpose. It should also enable the educators and learners to learn to live health in the world with HIV and AIDS and other health risks.
- b. Educational institutions are not only avenues for teaching and learning, but can be centres of support for learners and educators to promote referrals to school services.
- c. Policy management and systems should provide guidance, oversight and coordination to ensure effective, suitable and institutionalized educational responses to health challenges.
- d. Educational content, curriculum and materials should emphasize value clarification, capacity development and skill-building to enable learners to adopt learning and supportive attitude to others and protective and health seeking behaviours for themselves.
- e. Learning outcome should not only address academic performance, but should also be directed to the full development of human potentials and to ensure that education is a life-long process and in all social contexts (Family, School, Workplace and Community).



MANAGING SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

It is of great importance that educational managers in Nigeria generally and at secondary education in particular should take cognizance of the world class trend in education to renew and re-direct our educational programmes to be more functional and highly productive. To do this effectively, the knowledge of various human development approaches and their implication to educational planning become-imperative. The main factor in determining economic performance is to employ the concept of individuals as human capital. The recent formulation of the human capital theory, however places emphasis on the significance of education and training as the key to the participation of the individual in the new global economy. This school of thought is of the opinion that educational training is an investment to produce the man with necessary skill to alter the work and wages individual receive. According to Amadi (2014) management of secondary education in Nigeria is coordinated by Ministry of Education at both national and state levels. The federal Ministry of Education is federal government's agency saddled with the responsibility for regulation of both federal and state secondary schools. However, according to her, the State Ministries of Education are specifically concerned with state-owned public secondary schools as well as private secondary schools. The vision of both federal and state ministries of Education is to be a world-class education intervention and regulatory Agency for the promotion of uniform, qualitative and functional secondary education in Nigeria. The mission of the federal Ministries of Education to operate as coordinating and monitoring Agency is to progressively improve the capacity of states, local government Agencies and communities in the provision of unfettered access to high quality and functional secondary education in Nigeria. The mission statement of federal Ministry of Education which are also the overall philosophy of Nigeria is to live

in harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality, justice, honesty, accountability, integrity, transparency, teamwork and commitment. The Secondary Education programmes in Nigeria are implemented through close collaborative partnerships between federal and state post-primary schools Management Boards and Secondary education stakeholders at all levels.

Also important in the management of secondary education in Nigeria are the various school heads, that is the principals. These principals are the major in the field. They interface with parents, learners, environments and other stakeholders. They bridge the gap between the government and the people at the grass root. As professionals and administrative heads of the school, they plan, organize, direct and coordinate all the affairs of staff and students. The principals assign duties to teachers and supervise them so that the objectives of the school can be achieved. The need to train and re-train these principals to make them conversant with the objectives of secondary education cannot be over-looked.

Conclusion:

One of the needs and aspirations of Nigeria and Nigerians that has remained largely elusive is national cohesion. Education unarguably, contributes immensely to the development of individual's propensity to trust and be tolerant, which paves way for the attainment of national cohesion. Therefore, Education and indeed secondary education has a set of rules of standards of behavior that should be transmitted to the learners to enhance national cohesion, if effectively managed. The principals who are the major in the secondary education and who also interfaced with parents, learners, environments and other stakeholders should therefore possess certain essential leadership and administrative skills if secondary education will attain national cohesion. When this is guaranteed by Nigerian government and other stakeholders generally and principals in particular,



we can be sure that national cohesion can be truly harnessed in Nigeria.

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