



Culture as a Tool for National Integration in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria that was horribly put together by the colonial master without considering her differences in the area of culture, language, religion, tribe and many others has been facing many challenges that is almost tearing the nation apart, as a result there is need for national integration of different tribes that are looking at themselves as individual entities. This paper therefore looked into how national integration in Nigeria could be promoted through culture. The concept of integration and national integration were examined, factors that cause disintegration in the nation Nigeria were looked into and various roles play by previous administration to unifying the nation Nigeria was also examined. The paper recommends the following among others as a way forward toward integration of this nation; that Nigerian should begin to see themselves as one instead of seen themselves as northerners, southerners, easterners among others. Government at federal, state and local level should identify cultural values in the locality that can be used to foster integration; Cultural exchange among students of tertiary institutions should be encouraged.

Keywords: Culture, Religion, Politics, Integration, Tertiary institution

Introduction

Nigeria is a multi-cultural nation in which there are various tribes that were amalgamated together in 1914 by the Colonial Masters to form the country named Nigeria. Before the amalgamation in 1914, there was the Northern protectorate and the Southern protectorate. Wikipedia (2019) state that Northern Nigeria was a British protectorate which lasted from 1900 until 1914 and covered the northern part of what is now Nigeria. the capital city of Northern protectorate was Zungeru. The language that was widely spoken were English (official), Hausa, Arabic, Yoruba, Fulani and Kanuri. The nature of their governance was monarch which the major religion in that part of protectorate were Islam, Christianity, and African traditional religion. The first High Commissioner of the protectorate was Sir Fredrick Lugard.

Also, Southern Nigeria was a British protectorate in the coastal areas of modern-day Nigeria from 1900 by the Royal Niger Company below Lokoja on the Niger River (Wikipedia, 2019). The administrative capital was Lagos. The common languages spoken were English (official), Yoruba, Igbo, Ibibio, Edo and Ijaw. The religion of practice were Christianity, Islam and African traditional religion, while the mode of the governance was monarch. According to Barken, Gboyega and Stevens (2001), the process of unification was undermined by the persistence of difference regional perspectives on the governance between the Northern and Southern provinces and by Nigerian nationalists in Lagos.



The differences that were recognized before the amalgamation in 1914 are still persisting in the modern day Nigeria, no government has been able to identify the problem of unification till date. People are now talking of diversity in culture. If the cultural issues are not properly address by the various tiers of government, Nigerian may disintegrate. For Nigeria to be a strong and united nation is the reasons for this research work 'culture as a tool for national Integration in Nigeria

Culture is of two ways. Material culture and Non-material culture. But culture is more than that. Otile and Ogonwo (1990) defines couture as the complex whole of man's acquisition of knowledge, inwards beliefs, arts, custom, technology, traditions, skills and so on. Zimmerman (2017) defines culture as the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. Zimmerman (2017) stated further that 'culture appears to have become a key that connected the whole world, which is made up of so many ethnically diverse societies, but also riddled by conflicts associated with religion, ethnicity, ethnical beliefs and essentially, the elements which make up culture. The above definition identified the basic problem facing Nigerian in her cultural diversity.

Banks (2012) defines cultural consciousness as the process of developing awareness of culture in the self, which can result in expanding understanding of culture and developing deeper cultural knowledge about other individual and context. From the above, it can be translated as 'shared culture'. Shared culture are attitudes, values beliefs, behaviours that are normal and accepted in the society, goals and practices of an organizations, institutions or groups. To develop a cultural consciousness and individual is to assimilate the culture of his immediate environment and put such into practice unconsciously.

In Nigeria, there are different cultural groups; they are Hausas which are the largest ethnic group and makes up 25% of the Nigerian population. Despite being the main players in the Nigerian politics, their main occupation is farming, trading and cattle rearing (Silas, 2018). The Yoruba's are ethnic group that constitutes 21% of the Nigerian population making them the second largest group, the Igbo that are 18% are located in the Southern part of Nigeria they are mainly traders although some of them engage in handwork and formal education. The Ijaw are in the Delta area of Nigeria, they can be found in states like Edo, Bayelsa and Rivers Their lands are known to be extremely rich in oil leading to oil explorations which have left their land ecologically unsafe. The primary source of livelihood of the local people is fishing and farming. The Kanuri, they are located mainly in Maiduguri and Niger State. Their fashion bears resemblance with that of the Hausas with their women often dressed up with colorful scarf or turbans with black painted lips, hence designs and jewelry. The Ibibio numbers rankly about 4% of the population of Nigeria. Their location is in Akwa Ibom. Their main occupation is farming for those in the highland and fishing for those in the riverine areas. The Tiv have complex, unique and fascinating culture. They are found in Benue State, their main source of livelihood is agricultural produce. They take up of 2.5% of the population. The Fulani, they are of small group occupying most of the Hausa States. They are nomadic in nature, the Itsekiri are ethic group located at the Niger-Delta. They spread across states like Edo, Delta and Ondo, they are mostly traders and fishermen. The Igala are located at Kogi State, their man occupation is farming. The Idoma have values and preserved their tradition and culture. Efik people are found in Cross River State. Their culture is manifested through the 'Ekombi dance' (Silars, 2018).

These culture differences that exhibited by different ethnic groups in Nigeria is now tearing the country apart. The country is now polarized on all fronts to the extent that people are



now suspecting one other. No wonder, some sections of the country are now clamoring for restructuring of the nation in terms of the economy. Some are saying let practice true federalism where each region would be self-independent. Evidences of all these agitations are around where some section are been marginalized in term of sharing the national wealth. Ethnocentrisin is seen all over the land, hence there is need for national integration.

Integration

Opinion differs when talking of integration. Oxford advanced Learner's Dictionary, New 9th Edition defines integrations as the act or process of mixing people who have previously been separated, usually because of colour, race, religion etc. Abhishek (2019) stated that national integration is the feeling of togetherness or oneness towards one's own country irrespective of their individual differences with regard to religion, region, race, culture or caste. Abhishek (2019) went further to say that national integration is not only about national spirit, it involves a feeling that brings people from all areas irrespective of their dialects. From my own perspective national integration is a process in which all the segment of the nation will come together by forgetting each other culture, religion tribe and dialects purposely to build a united nation where every member will see himself as his brother keeper and it is now that we should imbibe the spirit of national integration. It is not over statement to say since the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates, Nigeria has not been united due to some factors such as religion, culture, politics and egotism.

Religion to some people, it is the belief a person has in the supreme being according to one's faith. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, New 9th Edition defines religion as the belief in the existence of a god of gods, and the activation that are connected with the worship of them, or in the teaching of a spiritual leader. Religion according to Karl Max is an opium of the people. Karl Max sees religion as one of those institutions which are dependent upon the materials and economic realities in a given society. Opium is a medical word that mean a depressant drug, which slow down the messages travelling between your brain and body (aDF, 2019). It seen the way the different religions group assimilate the teaching of their spiritual leaders through gradual process in assimilation and digesting of the facts been taught, hence the view of Karl Max on religion. This can be seen in the extreme, religion intolerance clearly seen in the land of Nigeria. Religious violence has been unleashed on many innocent citizens of this country, one wonders if Nigeria is truly a secular country which gives room for religious freedom (Ojo, 2017). Religious fanatic believes strongly that his religion is unquestionably and superior to other religions.

History noted that since the days of Tafawa Balewa in 1953 to date Nigeria has been witnessing one religious riot or the other. In 1980s the death of Mohammed Marwa (Maitatsine) brought serious outbreaks between Christian and Muslims in Kafanchan in Kaduna State. In 1991, the German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke attempted a crusade in Kano, causing a religious riot leading to the deaths of many people. In 2001, there was religious riot between Christian and Muslim in Jos about the appointment of a Muslim Politician as local coordinator to poverty. The riot spread to Kano and over 100 people were killed in October 2001 Boko Haran has unleashed jihad on Nigeria fighting Nigeria armed forces and sacking villages. They have massacre may Christians and others perceived as enemies of Islam since the year 2001 to date (Wikipedia, 2019).



Politics: This is the act of governance where interested members of the society engage in one politicking or the other. Rod and Martin (2013) defines politics as a set of activities associated with the governance of a country or an area. It involves making decision that applies to members of a group. This also can be referred to exercising position of authority in a group. The major aim of those in politics is to possess power in the group and if possible to improve the social status in the society they belong to. These types of people are referred to as politicians. In Nigeria an average politician is not trust worthy. Before assuming the position of authority they would promise to better the lives of the populace, but unfortunate when assuming the position they start doing otherwise. No wonder majority of the state governors in Nigeria refuse to pay workers' salaries as when due because they wanted to be super-rich before leaving the office. Also, Nigeria politics is so dirty that politicians always blackmail one another, washing their dirty line with in the public glare of the citizens. Those section of the country that the president and the vice president does not belong to them will start agitating for balancing in power or else they will be talking of marginalization. This always brings about disunity in the country. One section of the country will begin to suspect the others.

Egoism: This is when someone always believe in himself that there is no any other person except himself. Vocabulary com dictionary (2019) states that egoist is someone who is full of himself and doesn't give a damn about other people. Egoism has a lot to do with selfishness. The economy system of Nigeria gives room for egoism in which the few rich people see themselves as the alpha and omega of the poor makes, and these poor masses are looking unto the few rich people for their economic survival.

Culture: Nigeria is a society characterize by cultural pluralism. This cultural pluralism can be easily observed in linguistic and religious diversity. The cultural diversity in Nigeria affected her growth and development. The Nigeria people do not see themselves as one indivisible entity but the culture affiliation in which they belong to. For Nigeria to be a true nation and fulfilled the dreams of the founding fathers there must be cultural integration across the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Tertiary institutions are those post-secondary schools such as colleges of Education, The Polytechnics and the Universities. In the tertiary institutions students are admitted through quota system purposely for every geopolitical zone to be represented.

Cultural Integration

This is exchange of cultural beliefs by those who come together from different cultural group. Khan (2016) defines cultural integration as a form of cultural exchange in which one group assumes the beliefs, practices and rituals of another group without sacrificing the characteristics of its own culture. This method of integration can be easily achieved by introducing cultural foods, cultural beliefs and cultural arts to the young ones in their different tertiary institutions.

Cultural foods are goods that are particular to some section of the country; this can be seen in the ingredients used in preparing such a food, the production and the distribution of food. In Yorubaland their major stable food is pounded yam and Amala. Among the Hausas and Fulanis, their own stable food is "Tuwo" and 'Fura de-nunu' and among the Igbo it is Gari. If the government can catch these children young in their different institutions through these, love can be easily built in them towards those outside their ethnic group.



Cultural beliefs: since individuals were born and nurtured in different places their cultural beliefs will be different. The thinking and the way each ethnic behave is different. Among the Hausas and Fulanis when taking meal people of different socio-economics status come together and eat in the same plate, no discrimination.

Movement of Disables: Disables work freely on major roads without any molestation unlike Yoruba land and Igbo land. When students in tertiary institutions are integrated they can appreciate one another culture better and through such ways there is going to be peace and people will not be suspecting one another. Everyone will see themselves as Nigerian.

Cultural arts: There is diversity in the cultural arts of Nigeria people and these reflect in the behaviour of the young ones. Cultural arts such as music, art work, drama and dance can be used to integrate the young ones in their different tertiary institutions. According to Anthony (2016) Nigeria is one of the lovers of music. There are differences music in Nigeria such as afro beat, afropop, afrohiphop, juju music, reggae, raga, hip hop, jazz, techno rock, gospel or the folklore. All these are fun, the youth derive minimum joy from which if introduce the youth will enjoy themselves and see themselves as a true Nigeria. The art work of the different geopolitical zone can also be used. The artifacts and the paints works can be placed in their different hostel to be appreciated. Drama and dance always show case the differences in culture. Like egungun festival in Yorubaland, the festival is usually an annual celebration perform in specific month according to culture and the tradition of the locals. There are others specifically use during war. These categories are very dangerous. In general, the festival is believed to help foster unity among the locals.

Also, the Argungu fishing festival is annual events among the locals that attract people from the different part of the country even; foreigners that are familiar with the festival do attend. According to Wikipedia (2019), the Argungu dance festival is an annual four-day festival in Kebbi State of Nigeria. the festival began in the year 1934 as a mark of the end of the centuries-old hostility between the Sokoto caliphate and the kebbi kingdom. In the final day of the festival a competition is held in which thousands of men line up along the river and at the sound of a gunshot, all of them jump into the river and have an hour to catch the largest-fish, competitors are only allowed to use traditional fishing tools and many prefer to catch fish entirely by hand to demonstrate their prowess (Wikipedia, 2019).

New Yam festival of the Igbo people is an annual cultural festival by the Igbo people held at the end of the raining season (Wikipedia, 2019). Yam is a popular staple food among the Igbo. When yam festival is been celebrated its features the Igbo cultural activities in the form of contemporary shows, masquerade, dances and fashion parades. Though the style and methods may differ from one community to the next, the essential components that make up the festival remain the same (Hometown, 2019). This festival attracts people from different works of life, the celebration depicting the prominence of yam in the social cultural life of Igbo people.

Furthermore, campus politics can be used as a tool for national integration in Nigeria tertiary institutions when the management and every stakeholder of tertiary institutions allow for all-inclusiveness in campus politics whereby students from different parts of cultural diversity are allow to contest for one post or the other during the selection for the members of students representative council (SUG). If it takes place in the atmosphere of peace without meddling in



the process of the election by the stakeholders, this may serve as a platform for national integration.

Also, the main religion in Nigeria context is Christianity, Islam and Traditional. NUC which is the body governing Tertiary institutions should endeavour to incorporate these religion beliefs in their general studies curriculum. Through this every students will have the knowledge of other religion outside his/her over religion and students will try to appreciate other people belief and there will be zero level of religion intolerance among the students.

Tertiary institutions should return to the post-independence even where students in the tertiary institutions were been served more a less free meal. Students should be allowed to have access to some basic amenities such as food, shelter, clothing and library irrespective of their socioeconomic background. In other words, all the students should be eating the same type of food, sleeping in the same dormitory, wearing the same cloth and visiting the same library, this will allow them to have the same thinking and the issue of national integration will be at ease for the government.

Tertiary Institution

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria are the post-secondary education. Such institutions are Colleges of Education, the Polytechnics, the Nursing schools, the Universities and others that give admission to students after the completion of their secondary education. In tertiary institutions it is the believe that students in this type of institutions are of mature mind. If students in tertiary institutions are properly guided it is the nation that will enjoy their input. That is why in most of the private tertiary institutions in Nigeria the management of such institutions are giving the students dressing code, like what John Locke said that the mind of a child is like tabularazer whatever is written there is what that child is going to carry about so it is better for the government to make use of this medium to integrate the students for better Nigeria by introducing culture as a compulsory course to be taking by students in Nigeria tertiary institutions.

Conclusion

There is a cultural diversity in Nigeria due to different ethnic groups that make up the nation, Nigeria, cultural diversity, the quality of diverse or different cultures. diversity refers to the attribute that people use to confirm themselves with respect to others. Such factors include demographic as well as values and cultural norms. Most values and cultural norms are rich in intellectual which can cement unity among the diverse people of Nigeria. From the festivities of the different ethnic group, in the above discourse if the government at the various level can key into it, surely there would be peace and unity among the various ethnic group in Nigeria.

Suggestions

Based on the discussion above the following recommendations is hereby made;

1. Nigerians should start seeing themselves as Nigerian not as a northerner, easterner or westerner.
2. Government at Federal, State and Local level should identify the cultural values and norms in the locality that they can use to foster unity among their locals.
3. The curriculum in our tertiary institution should give room for cultural exchange among the students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.



4. Federal government should take it upon herself to sponsor cultural exchange among the students of tertiary institution through the management of the various institutions; and
5. The issue of quota system in admission should adhere to among the federal institution that the six geographical zone would be well represented for easy social and cultural integration in the tertiary institution.

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