

Managing Secondary Education in Nigeria for National Cohesion

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ABSTRACT

Globally, a major purpose that education has been identified to attain is national cohesion. Unarguably, certain essential leadership and administrative skills are required of the principals, who are the managers of the secondary education system, if secondary education will achieve national cohesion. Therefore, this study looked at the relationship between effective management of secondary education and the attainment of national cohesion in Nigeria. The paper looked at the concept of management and explored the state Nigerian educational system with an emphasis on secondary education. It attained the concept of secondary education and the goals and challenges of secondary education. The paper also discussed the concept and challenges of national cohesion, as well as education and national cohesion. The paper concluded that secondary education managers should possess the necessary administrative leadership skills in order to attain national cohesion. Based on the analysis and conclusion, the paper recommended, among others, that Nigeria should devote 26% of the national budget to education, policy management and systems should provide guidance and coordination to ensure effective and institutionalised educational responses to national challenges, and educational content, curriculum, and materials should emphasise value clarification, capacity development, and skill building.

Keywords: Managing, secondary, education, 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 the realisation of economic goals, benefiting both individuals and their goals. Education, therefore, has a set of rules or standards of behaviour that should be transmitted to the learners intentionally to enhance national cohesion, if properly managed. This entails that there are standards of behaviour and values that education, and secondary education in particular, should seek to achieve in order to attain national cohesion.

Education is the light without which the world will be in darkness and chaos (Balogun, 2010). doubled, education is therefore a valuable instrument in the production of human capital resources for a nation. Dunga (2011) defined education as an aggregate of all the processes through which a child develops abilities, activities, and other forms of behaviour that are of positive value to ociety. Thus, the focus of education is to equip individuals with knowledge, abilities, skills, and other forms of behaviour to enable them to function effectively in their immediate environment and in society at large. Education seeks to socialise 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 unarguable that secondary education in Nigeria is designed to transmit desirable values such as good work ethics, patriotism, tolerance, honesty, and fairness, which are outstanding parameters for achieving national cohesion.

In Nigeria, secondary education is an important link between primary education and tertiary education and determines the quality and quantity of the impact at the tertiary level, where the higher manpower needs of the nation are met. According to Anyaoga (2008), cited in Nsude (2015), secondary education coincides with the critical period of adolescence, when important careers, desirable values, norms, and life choices are made. In a naturalistic society like Nigeria, secondary education is designed to ensure national cohesion, which will enthrone national stability. It is through secondary education that the youth will realise the importance of unity and national cohesion, as each ethnic group's nationality is accepted on an equal basis as an important component of the country. There is therefore a need to reorient both the principals and teachers for an effective teaching and learning process, as well as the proper management of this level of education. It is imperative, therefore, to note that education cannot be an instrument for excellence in achieving national cohesion when secondary education is not effectively managed to bring about the most desirable values: tolerance, oneness, and unity.

Educational management is concerned with the planning and formation of educational policies or programmes with a view to achieving educational objectives (Peretomode, 2012). According to Dunga (2011), educational management involves some planning, organising, staffing, directing, controlling, coordinating, and budgeting. It entails the process of utilising human and material resources using the functions of planning, organising, directing, leading, coordinating, and controlling to achieve educational outcomes. It is all about strategizing, planning, organising, running, and supervising the entire process of teaching and learning that takes place at all levels of the formal education system. Against this background, it has become imperative to examine managing secondary education in order to attain the much-desired national cohesion in Nigeria.

CONCEPTS OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education is a vital link between primary education and tertiary education and also a gateway to the labour market for those who do not, for any reason, continue into tertiary education (Nsude 2015). Secondary education introduces children to a wider world, sharpens their minds for further academic work, opens their eyes to a further generation, incorporates political, economic, and social competences, and helps to raise their intelligence (Abraham and Amaechina 2011). Also, according to Aggarwal (2008), cited in Nsude (2015), secondary education in India is a complete unity in itself and not merely a preparatory stage. At the end of this period, the student should be in a position if he wishes to enter into the responsibilities of life and take up some useful vocation. This position was equally considered in the recent new Nigerian secondary school curriculum, which was designed to provide not only academic studies but also vocational, technical, and entrepreneurial education, as well as foster patriotism and security education with emphases on the common ties, in spite of our diversity. The curriculum has been enriched to ensure an integrated secondary education in which a wider range of subjects are made valuable to students so as to foster national cohesion and unity.

The basic functions of the secondary education system in Nigeria are to prepare students for useful living within society and for higher education.

In line with CRM (2013), secondary education shall last for six years, broken into two distinct parts that are correlated with the groundwork of the first three years: junior secondary school (jss), dovetailing into the next three years of senior secondary school (sss). The goals of secondary education, according to the National Policy on Education (2013), are geared towards realising the following objectives:.

1. Providing all primary school learners with the opportunity for higher education, irrespective of sex, social status, religious, or ethnic background;
2. Offering a diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities, and future roles.
3. Providing trained manpower in applied science, technology, and commerce at sub-professional grades.
4. Developing and promoting Nigerian language, art, and culture in the context of its cultural heritage;
5. Inspiring students with a desire for self-improvement and the achievement of excellence;
6. Fostering national unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity
7. Raising a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals, and live as good citizens;
8. Providing technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial, and economic development.

The above aims and objectives of secondary education make it clear that the future and unity of any nation depend on the quality of education it provides for its citizens. Since the quality of education received at this level is vital, there is a need to effectively manage secondary education for national cohesion and global competitiveness. In fact, after going through secondary education, the learner is expected to be able to contribute effectively and productively to life activities in society and national cohesion. This noble contribution, according to Obanya (2009), cited in Nsude (2015), includes the learners activity to use the acquired knowledge, skills, competences, values, and attitude to desire, seek, recognise, and utilise available opportunity for something new to create wealth for themselves and others and consequently contribute effectively to society in the achievement of national cohesion.

MANAGING SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

It is imperative that educational managers in Nigeria, particularly at the secondary education level, 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 effectively do this, knowledge of various human development approaches and their implications for educational planning becomes imperative. The recent formulation of the human capital theory, however, places emphasis on the significance of education and training as keys to the participation of individuals in the new global economy. This school of thought holds the view that educational

training is an investment to produce the man with the necessary skills to alter the work and wages an individual receives.

According to Amadi (2014), the management of secondary education in Nigeria is coordinated by the Ministry of Education at both the national and federal levels. The Federal Ministry of Education is a federal agency saddled with the responsibility of regulating both federal and state secondary schools. However, the State Ministries of Education are specifically in charge of state-owned public secondary schools as well as private secondary schools. The vision of both the Federal and State Ministries of Education intervention and regulatory agencies is to promote uniform, qualitative, and functional secondary education in Nigeria. The mission of the Federal Ministries of Education to operate as a coordinating and monitoring agency is to progressively improve the capacity of states, local government agencies, and communities in the provision of unfiltered access to high-quality and functional secondary education in Nigeria.

The mission statement of the federal ministry of education, which is 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 school management boards and secondary education stakeholders at all levels. Also important in the management of secondary education in Nigeria are the various school heads (principals). They interfaced with parents, learners, environments, and other stakeholders. They bridge the gap between the government and the people at the grassroots. As professionals, they plan, organise, direct, and coordinate all the activities of the state and students.

The principal assigns duties to teachers and supervises them to ensure that the objectives of secondary education cannot be overlooked.

CHALLENGES IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Federal Republic of Nigeria, in its National Policy on Education (2013), published the educational objectives in terms of the needs of the individual as well as the kind of society desired in the modern world. It also contains government guidelines on implementation and monitoring strategies to ensure that there is uniformity in educational practices in different parts of the country. Many primary and secondary schools across the Federation suffer from a lack of necessary infrastructure and the death of renovations of existing ones. This has negatively affected the happiness, enthusiasm, and quality of learning of our students, which, of course, is a contributing factor to the massive failures of students both in interval and external examinations annually. For instance, a statistical analysis of five selected secondary schools in the Burutu Local Government area of Delta State indicated that for a period of ten years, none could produce an average of up to 50% of its candidates making five credits, including English and Mathematics (Gbenu 2012).

According to Gbenu (2012), another challenge in secondary education is the aspect of instructional materials and methodologies. Teachers are not motivated to

embark on the improvisation of learning materials. Also, there has been an acute decline in the government supply of graphic materials, appropriate textbooks, and other teaching and learning aids to schools in many states of the country. Closely related to the above is the inadequacy of a good classroom, which has resulted in some states deciding to run a two-shift school management system. There is a dearth of good classroom space with furniture, which could have provided moderate comfort to both the teachers and the students in the teaching and learning environment and should necessitate quality education (Ahmed, 2003).

It is pertinent to state that secondary school inspection and teacher supervision exercises have degenerate to mere routine exercises with no meaningful feedback to the system. In view of this, proper attention has not been given to the quality of development in secondary schools. The challenges emanating from this are poor infrastructural facilities, non-systematic planning and implementation of secondary education practices and activities, poor management of school resources, and poor implementation of instruction. This led Efetani (2017) to assert that officials in the ministry of education should be trained in the use of modern inspection and supervision techniques in line with the aims and emphasis of education.

Again, the national policy on education (2013) stated unequivocally that guidance and counselling units are to be created to advise students on the choice of subjects that best suit their attitude. This has not been the case, and this development has adversely affected the good performance of the students. This has resulted in frustration and tension on the part of the students, as they are not guided properly in their career pursuits. In light of the challenges of secondary education, it becomes difficult to realise the objectives of secondary education in Nigeria. The realisation of the objective, which will facilitate national cohesion, depends on the extent to which an enabling environment is created for secondary education. National cohesion is propelled by the fact that the quality of education is low and standard; national cohesion will, by extension, be equally low and standard. This explains why effective management of secondary education is important. Secondary education in Nigeria is critical to national cohesion.

CONCEPT OF NATIONAL COHESION

Cohesion is a word used to describe unity or togetherness. According to Udeh (2014), cohesion means an act or state that sticks people together; it is synonymous with unity. Cohesion is a conscious effort and preparedness for diverse groups of people to come together and affirm the condition of mutual independence. Nation cohesion is therefore the process and product of being calculative and enabling all citizens in the country to have a sense as well as a feeling that they are members of the same country, engaged in one enterprise, and facing shared challenges. This involves the construction of an integrated citizenry with a sense of belonging amongst members of different groups and regions of a country (Wafula, 2013). This is achieved through the regulation and reconciliation of different, competing interests and demands. National cohesion is therefore central when everyone in the country has equal opportunity, resources, and motivation to participate in society as fully as they wish and on an equal basis with others.

National cohesion does not mean absence of disagreement, but those disagreements play out and are being 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 force. The need for finding a common solution for ensuring national cohesion through education cannot be overemphasized. This is further justified by the apathy and dissatisfaction created by an overheated political economy resulting from the spillover of the economic recession. This also created capacity underutilization in particular and unemployment in general (Bello, 2016). The idea encapsulated in this study is that education at the secondary school level could be restructured to encompass various skills and competencies that could engender global competitiveness and ensure inclusion and higher productivity among secondary education graduates in Nigeria.

Restructuring Nigeria for national cohesion encompasses equal access to decision-making and uninterrupted access to social welfare for all. Therefore, Nigeria cannot afford to be disunited, especially with the diverse ethnic setting that has been politically polarized. Any that desires sustainable growth and development, cohesion in a sinequa-non. Therefore, it is pertinent that educational managers pursue the objective of national tolerance and unity through the visible impact of development on the lives of their students, which engenders national cohesion. However, national cohesion and unity in Nigeria have suffered many setbacks due to the civil war of 1967–1970, Niger Delta terrorism, the clamour for the republic of Biafra, the Bokehuran Insurgence, and herdsmen attacks (Adesun, 2018).

The secondary education system has inherent features that bring learners of different family backgrounds together. Social status and religious inclination together to study in the same environment. In the process of studying together, there is several integration among students in their groups of friends and acquaintances. However, the real-life experiences show 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 (Ozochi, 2010). These are therefore different forces operating within the Nigerian socio-economic environment that inhibit the influence of the consistent spread of educational privileges among Nigerians. Even when education should serve as a verifying factor, certain other extraneous variables very often interfere to disenfranchise some Nigerians from acquiring education. It is therefore imperative that if educational opportunities are equally distributed in Nigeria, their unifying features in achieving national cohesion may be better imagined. Therefore, secondary education is capable of unifying the recipient if the change in the recipient is consistent, but when some people drop out for one reason or another, secondary education may not accomplish its role as a unifying agent among the citizens of any nation.

Nigeria, as a hybrid society, has various federating units tightly knitted together through a market system, with goods and services moving from one part of the country to the other in 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 the economy factor as the determining variable for national cohesion, but where national politics is conflated with religion, the hybrid function would be distorted because religion is not and would neither be a unifying factor nor vehicle for national cohesion. It is true that 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 reinforces the fact that education is the best instrument for fostering national cohesion in Nigeria, but it must be properly managed, especially at the secondary education level.

Nigeria is a country with multi-ethnic groups. Each group clings to its own culture tenaciously. Issues in Nigeria are perceived as having ethnic bias. This explains why education is critical to enhancing national cohesion. It is only through education that the cultural horizons of various ethnic groups can be widened. This will enhance the integration of various groups into one nation. Secondary education, which reinforces value systems, is in a better position to realise this goal if properly managed.

INDICATORS OF A COHESIVE NATION

These include:

1. Peaceful coexistence among all citizens from diverse backgrounds.
2. There are similar and equal life opportunities for every member of society, irrespective of social status, ethnicity, and religious background.
3. Common vision and sense of belonging.
4. Strong, positive, and sustainable relationships developed between people from different backgrounds.
5. Appreciation and value for people of diverse backgrounds and circumstances.

BENEFITS OF A COHESION NATION

1. Improved economic performance and wellbeing.
2. Unified approach to confronting external threats.
3. Enhanced credibility locally and internationally and accelerated the peacemaking process.
4. Building a strong national identity.
5. Promotion of equality in the sharing of national resources.
6. Commitment to national ideas
7. Enhance national solidarity and harmony.

CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL COHESION

The major challenges facing Nigeria as a nation are national unity and cohesion. The different agitations ranging from restructuring, resource control, self-determination, and state police, among others, are too much for the country to grapple with at a time when the economy is in recession. Ethnic and religious hostilities that unfolded across the country as Obasanjo took power in 1999 remain intractable, the economy is in the doldrums, and political violence has persisted. The political scene is filled with confusion and uncertainty. Many Nigerians are apprehensive, wondering if a peaceful election can be guaranteed.

Another impediment to the attainment of national cohesion has been the colonial legacy of division and rule and the precedent set in defining which regions provide labour for particular professions—the Northerners or the Southerners. For instance, the Vota system—catchment areas, educationally advantaged areas, and educationally disadvantaged areas—has been a problem in Nigeria. The diversity of the Nigerian state constitutes the greatest difficulty in achieving national cohesion. Further challenges to national cohesion centre on the failure to conceptualise and define national cohesion since the term itself does not, by essence, automatically imply the direction, substance, or amount of change that would bring about welfare improvements. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) stated that there is enormous pressure on the education system to adopt corporatization as marketization approaches. This has led to the proliferation of foreign curricula that do not promote national cohesion and integration. For instance, students study the history of foreign countries at the expense of learning the history of their own country. Such learning is not likely to be patriotic. The nation's political gladiators do not help matters in terms of national cohesion. They encourage ethnicism in their quest for votes, thereby creating a widening gap among ethnic groups.

MANAGING SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL COHESION IN NIGERIA

Since mid-1903 and the conception of Education for All (ECA) as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS), most education efforts have been geared towards the acquisition of primary education. However, the voice of post-secondary supporters has over the years gained ground, giving rise to the rapid proliferation of secondary education as a critical element in achieving the MDGS, political stability, socio-economic cohesion, and national cohesion (UNESCO, 2008). As a bridge between primary and tertiary education, the secondary education system is a preparatory phase for youths before they gain access to the legal society, e.g., kipping them with the required legal, social, political, and scientific skills.

It is widely acknowledge that secondary education provides an optimal platform where young people especially teenagers can be developed and trained to lead healthy and productive adult lives and participate actively in the social, specific and economic spheres of live-secondary education is also fast becoming a prerequisite through which countries aspire to complete globally, equip their citizens to gain specific skills and attitudes required for increasing technology advanced global markets place for nations that grappling and overcoming the effects of years of crisis and conflicts, secondary education equip young people with required training and education to rebuild a stable nation and foster unity(buckland ,2005). To achieve the aims, the challenge is for countries trying to move from developing to developed or those recovering from crises to ensure that their secondary education accommodates enough students to meet these requirements, provides a curriculum of sufficient quality and length, trains administrators and teachers, and monitors and evaluates them to ensure they deliver according to pre-set standards (UNESCO 2010).

Currently, UNESCO (2015) estimates an increasing page in secondary education, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, with a rise from 519 million in 2009

to 583 million in 2015. In Nigeria, the country has witnessed an average of 25.65 percent enrolment in secondary education between 1970 and 2017, with a minimum enrolment of 14.43 percent in 1970 and a maximum of 65.15 percent in 2017 (World Bank, 2018). With the phenomenal increase in enrolment comes the need to reposition and reform the whole secondary education curriculum to ensure that it is of quality and relevance to all students. There has been a huge attempt on the part of the government, through the recruitment of outstanding and credible teachers, to handle issues relating to national cohesion encapsulated within the secondary school curriculum. To nurture enlightened and national citizens, students should be allowed to debate these issues, especially at the secondary education level. The curriculum needs to be such that it encourages more critical thinking, inquiry, and open deliberation. This is critical to understanding the inter-ethnic issues that the nation faces.

There is no simple formula for ensuring that it is actualized, but one of the key mechanisms is effective management. In the planning stage, informed decision-making is required to ensure that the revised curriculum meets the needs of both the nation and the individual economically, culturally, socially, politically, and religiously. It should inculcate a detailed analysis of the current international labour market needs, opportunities for tertiary and professional education, social and political values, as well as the aptitudes required to build a sustained and peaceful democracy.

In addition, a detailed financial analysis is required that will not only begin the process of reform but will also be sufficient for a post-impact evaluation. Management is required to ensure that not only funds are acquired and planning is conducted, but also that teachers are adequately trained to deliver the new curriculum that supports the desired change. Qualified teachers and administrators are imperative, and the issues associated with them, such as recruitment and professional development, need to be addressed. The process should also include multiple stakeholders, including the teachers' union, who need to be aware of these events to enable them to support the agreed conditions of service and remuneration, and the community, for instance, should accept and legitimise the new curriculum and possibly contribute towards the required resources.

National cohesion entails a deliberate process of constructing an integrated citizenry with a sense of belonging among members of different groups and from different religions through the regulation and reconciliation of different as well as competing interests. The ultimate goal of national cohesion is to create a dominant national community that renders loyalty to competing ethnic, racial, regional, class, and religious communities. It embraces unity of purpose in citizen participation in the economic, social, and political process. It calls for equity in the generation and sharing of the country's resources and places priority on the existence of peace and security. It takes into consideration the development of social, political, and economic realities.

In a nutshell, education and national cohesion are like brothers. They go hand in hand. Education enhances national cohesion, and national cohesion creates an enabling environment where trust, love, understanding, and peace reign

supreme. This type of environment encourages quality education that enhances national development.

CONCLUSION

Unarguably, education is paramount to the development of individuals propensity to trust and be tolerant, which pave the way for the achievement of national cohesion. Therefore, education, and indeed, secondary education in particular, has a set of rules and standards that should be transmitted to the learners to engender national cohesion. The principals, who are the major stakeholders in secondary education and who also interface with parents, learners, environments, and other stakeholders, should therefore process certain necessary leadership and administrative skills if secondary education will attain national cohesion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion and for the attainment of national cohesion and unity, the following recommendations are made:

1. Policy management and systems should provide guidance, oversight, and coordination to ensure effective, suitable, and institutionalised educational responses to national challenges.
2. Educational content, curriculum, and materials should emphasise value clarification, capacity development, and skill-building to enable learners to adopt a learning and supportive attitude towards others.
3. Learning outcomes should not only address academic performance but should also be directed towards the full development of human potential and to ensure that education is a life-long process in all social contexts (family, school, workplace, and community).
4. Educational institutions are not only avenues for teaching and learning but can also be centres of support for learners and educators to promote referrals to school services.
5. Funding education has been a vexing issue in Nigeria. It should comply with the United Nations directive that nations should devote 26% of their budgets to education. This will enhance the quality of education delivery, which will equip Nigerian youth for national cohesion.
6. Co-curriculum activities should be strengthened and monitored, such as those involving dialogues that promote intellectual understanding.

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