

NIGERIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY: TEACHERS AS A TOOL FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION

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Abstract

Education is a tool for bringing about change and promoting national unity. Teachers are essential to the spread of ideas and knowledge. Ethnicity, religion, culture, values, and prospects are just a few of the characteristics that define nations around the world and are enjoyed by their people to varying degrees. Due to this varied heritage, the country integrates and develops, which may lead to general advancement in the political, economic, and other spheres. Basic education and national integration are fundamentally based on the value of teachers and the roles they play in the educational process. Thus, the focus of this study is on teachers' roles and national integration in the twenty-first century. The study included a discussion of the trend in teacher education in Nigeria. This study also emphasized six functions that teachers play: mentor and advisor, pinnacle of wisdom, social harmony promoters, facilitator of socialization, builder of the nation, and social change agent. It was determined that educators in Nigeria ought to serve as facilitators of national integration in the classroom at all levels, regardless of variations in racial backgrounds, cultural traditions, and linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, fundamental education and national integration are fundamentally dependent on the value of teachers and the roles they perform in the educational process. Teachers play a key role in bringing about change, fostering national integration, and fostering tolerance for pupils' individual diversity.

Keywords: Education, National Integration, Roles, Teachers, Socialization

Introduction

Ethnicity, religion, culture, values, and prospects are just a few of the characteristics that define nations around the world and are enjoyed by their people to varying degrees. Due to this varied heritage, the country integrates and develops, which may lead to general advancement in the political, economic, and other spheres. A nation is characterized as a collection of people united in a particular geographic area by shared interests, goals, and aspirations resulting from shared ethnic heritage, language, religion, historical memory, and overt aspirations for unification and integration (Adeyemi, 2018). According to Amali & Jekayinfa (2013), integration refers to the process of fostering unity in society to eradicate disharmony and division and make it free from conflict and dissent. Lone (2018) views a wide range of interpersonal relationships and attitudes as part of national integration. It comprises the blending of various, distinct cultural legacies with the growth of a unified identity.

This highlights the ongoing process of unity among diverse human beings with varying socio-cultural, political, and psychological backgrounds within a particular social environment or polity, acknowledging their shared interests. It emphasizes the development of empathy, cooperation, harmony, teamwork, and a shared feeling of identity or citizenship for the actualization of the national goal. On January 1, 1914, Sir Frederick Lord Lugard combined the Northern and Southern Protectorates, bringing Nigeria together as a single nation. This union was governed by colonial

powers until October 1, 1960, when Nigeria got its independence from Great Britain. According to Adeyemi (2018), the formation of Nigeria as a nation in 1914 occurred within the framework of British imperialist economic exploitation and gains, which were reinforced in post-colonial states through the divide-and-rule policy of colonial rule and caused distrust and division among different ethnic and religious groups. Divisions between different ethnic and religious groups were brought about by this disunity, particularly in the distribution of material and human resources.

Adeyemi (2018) emphasized further that the 1914 merger sowed the seeds of divisiveness models of national integration rather than providing a strong foundation for unity and harmonious cohabitation amongst various communities of Nigerians. Striving for greater unity among differences is the primary goal of national integration. Its goal is to advance the act or process of bringing racial, religious, and ethnic groups together in a close, harmonious manner. It also aims to improve the mingling of once-divided populations. The goal of national integration is to establish strong bonds and a sense of shared identity among all the nation's residents. Not just about patriotism or national spirit, it's a sentiment that unites people from different backgrounds, languages, and worldviews in a shared experience.

We must remain strong, together, and promote peaceful coexistence without allowing any form of stereotyping to exist. It is necessary to restore mutual trust and revitalize our national ideals by embracing the traits that foster unity among Nigeria's ethnic groups. Numerous problems, including as insecurity, unemployment, poor administration, religious disagreements, cultural division, ethnic conflict, and unstable economic conditions, might impede national integration. Given Nigeria's diversity, if we continue to identify as different groups and divide ourselves into smaller ones, we will never be able to accomplish our national objective as a heterogeneous state. This is where education will play a role, as it can reach a large number of children and has a pervasive and ubiquitous influence.

Teacher Education Programme in Nigeria

Education is shown from a variety of angles as a potent force for change. Every human society spends a great deal of time and effort passing on its cultural legacy to the next generation. The fundamental purpose and significance of education is to transmit cultural heritage across generations. One way to conceptualize education is as the dissemination of a society's ideals and body of knowledge. It is comparable to what social scientists refer to as socialization or enculturation in this regard. It can be defined as the channel by which the community passes on its cultural legacy to the next generation. Any society's educational system typically reflects its entire nature. This indicates that it captures its way of thinking and living. Any civilization that wants to educate its members must impart any knowledge that is considered valuable.

According to Orobosa (2010), education is the process by which a person develops the many social and physical skills required by the society they were born into. Ensuring an individual's appropriate functioning and survival within their community is the fundamental purpose of education. An individual's capacity to favorably influence and improve society is enhanced by education. Orobosa (2010) noted that education is to a country what the mind is to the body. He compares the state of a sick mind that impairs the ability to coordinate and guide physical movements to an inadequate educational system. The regulation of instruments for societal growth is one of education's most

important and difficult social functions. Realizing the importance of education for both the individual and the community.

In the views of Dienye (2004), education entails the teacher making conscious attempts to mold the child's personality and get him ready to join society. Through engagement and connection with the outside world, education advances. This process starts the moment he is born and continues to shape his attitude, conduct, consciousness, and perception. This process continues by strengthening his principles and providing a distinct perspective on life. Put another way, a person becomes socialized in his culture by his interactions with his surroundings. Furthermore, the achievement of proper education results from empowering the child's potential in line with the requirements of the social environment in which he lives. "The wise, hopeful and respectful cultivation of learning undertaken in the belief that everyone should have the chance to share in life," is how Smith (2015) summarizes education. One factor that is crucial for national integration is education. It is capable of overcoming all obstacles the nation faces, whether they be political or economic.

Additionally, it imparts knowledge to the populace that is crucial for national integration. Education unites the populace of the nation and enables them to distinguish between many factors that impact their lives. Education in the modern world increases one's chances of finding work, which in turn leads to a better lifestyle, power, and position. Knowledge has been commercialized as intellectual property, especially when it comes to aligning intellectual output with societal, corporate, and governmental goals and objectives (Patted, 2003). The globe has united into a single community. Education is the most crucial instrument for promoting global development since no nation can exist in isolation from the effects of global trends and changes in all spheres of life. Thus, schooling is greatly impacted by this era of knowledge (Misra & Bajpai, 2011). Since it provides instruction to prepare future teachers, teacher education is the brains behind all other academic fields. Teachers are the most valuable resources in any educational system since they are the mothers of all professions. They are situated at the nexus of values, skills, and knowledge transmission. They are acknowledged as the system's pillars. As a result, it is widely acknowledged that the caliber of a teacher has a substantial impact on both the overall and specific learning outcomes of pupils in education. (Patted, 2003)

It is appropriate to refer to the teacher as a nation-builder. Teachers have shown us the correct road by their love, sacrifice, and tenacity; it is along this path that great men have established our nation. The educators who shape students' personalities and characters and provide guidance that gets us where we want to go. The foundation of both thriving national development and a fully knowledge-rich society is its educational system. It should be kept in mind that knowledge cannot be obtained if it is not sought out and obtained with the assistance of the teacher. This is true even though the importance of knowledge and a knowledgeable community with goals and aspirations in a country's development cannot be overstated. For this reason, everyone should try to learn as much as they can, and they should recognize the value of teachers in helping the next generation of people to become ethically and intellectually mature. Acquiring knowledge without the supervision of an instructor is likened to a visually impaired person walking without a cane.

Teachers must therefore have a strong sense of devotion to the tasks and obligations that have been placed in their hands. The instructor serves as a judge, assigning grades and ratings. To better prepare them for the social and professional roles they will later play, he makes distinctions between children based on their intellectual and frequent social abilities. To accomplish this, he suggests school-wide

promotions and demotions, suggests kids for certain exams, and counsels' kids and their parents on suitable coursework and career options. A representation of the community, the teacher instills moral values. Education and learning, together with morality, are essential to a nation's progress, and no one is better prepared to help with this process than the modest teacher. Both morals and knowledge would suffer in the absence of teachers. Formal instruction and experiences are what make a person qualified to take on responsibilities as a member of the teaching profession or to carry out those responsibilities as successfully as possible.

According to Durosaro (2006), teacher preparation in Nigeria has significantly improved since 1970. A good teacher should be intelligent and business-minded, as well as clever, creative, industrious, disciplined, kind, firm, forceful, good-looking, godly, and gentle, according to Bande (2000) and Ajayi (2004). The writers list modesty, inventiveness, integrity, magnanimity, neatness, responsibility, timeliness, simplicity, serious-mindedness, dependability, and radiance as further qualities of a successful teacher. A competent teacher needs to be academically qualified above all else. Akindutire (2005) also emphasized the following qualities of a good teacher in a related context: initiative, firmness, respect, sympathy, patience, honesty, intellectual interest, and keenness. To sum up, these qualities turn a teacher become an inspiration to students and into a living example of honesty, decency, and hard work in the community. Durosaro (2006) emphasizes once more the importance of a person's overall educational experiences in preparing them for teaching and other educational roles as well as for the development of their competency in those roles.

These teacher education programs are provided by teacher colleges, which include teachers' training colleges, faculties of education in universities, and colleges of education. To foster social cohesiveness, national integration, and a learning society, educators are the leaders in these areas. They produce and develop new knowledge in addition to disseminating existing knowledge. They oversee the educational system's acculturation. Any country's ability to develop is largely dependent on how well its educators do their jobs. According to Patted (2003), these expectations imply that teachers work in a larger context with dynamics and issues that affect how they do their jobs. To achieve the aims of equity, parity, social justice, and quality, teachers must be receptive to and sensitive to the social context of education, the different inequities in the backgrounds of their students, as well as the macro national and global contexts. To meet the demands of a globalized society, educators must: comprehend children in their social, cultural, and political contexts; see knowledge as constructed in the shared context of teaching, learning, and personal experiences rather than as an external reality found in textbooks; and develop the necessary competencies to be able to both seek and create the understandings in real-world scenarios. A country is reliant on the actions of its educators. In a similar vein, they are attempting to expand the student basement. A competent teacher builds a student, regardless of the school, college, or university.

Even a teacher of technical courses or specific talents has role duties within society. Because of this, a teacher shapes the leader of the future. In addition, a pupil fails throughout his entire life if a teacher is unable to see the potential in him. This indicates that a teacher is a student's finest mentor in life. The incorporation of technology into every aspect of life has brought about a significant transformation in the 21st-century educational system. The students are also more mature than they were in the past. Today's education in the twenty-first century is based on thinking, interpersonal, technological, informational, and life skills. Particularly, modern education places a strong focus on life and professional skills. Rote learning is no longer valuable. It must, in general, satisfy industry needs. To

put it another way, when a student can use what they have learned outside of the classroom, the teaching is effective.

In the submission of Obanya (2004), the days when a teacher only needed to be knowledgeable about their subject matter are long gone. This adage is starting to hold truer in the twenty-first century, as the speed at which technology is developing suggests that gaining knowledge is no longer a "once in a lifetime" opportunity for an individual. It is more of an asset that needs to be updated frequently. As a result, the instructor must possess a respectable level of general studies knowledge, with a focus on ICT. Since no country's education can surpass the caliber of its instructors, improving teacher education programs should be a global priority, with a particular emphasis on poor nations (Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy on Education, 2004). Professionally qualified teachers are required to deliver competent and effective instruction and learning, according to Lawal and Oluwaloyin (2011). They must manage and regulate their classrooms to ensure that students learn effectively, and they must use teaching aids to enhance other teaching strategies. They emphasize once more how the greatest approach for African teachers to handle the difficulties of the twenty-first century is through proper training.

This explains the remarkable growth of education in Nigeria during the past 20 years, both at the national and international levels, as well as the active experimentation in all areas of education. To encourage all citizens to pursue education, the government offered primary, secondary, and university programs. To guarantee progress and development across the nation, the government places a high priority on educational quality and establishes nationally recognized standards and norms (Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 2000). Regrettably, federal efforts to guarantee that education was genuinely accepted as a tool for successful national development have yielded little over the years. Ololube (2006) contends that the use of ineffective teachers in the instructional process may be primarily to blame for these issues.

The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) outlines five value objectives for teachers' education, which serve as the foundation for Nigeria's teacher production philosophy. These are listed in the following order:

- a. To develop exceptionally driven, diligent, and effective classroom instructors for every level of our educational structure.
- b. To support educators' curiosity and inventiveness.
- c. To assist educators in integrating into local communities and society at large and strengthening their dedication to national goals.
- d. To give educators a professional and intellectual basis appropriate for their work and to enable them to adjust to any changing circumstances in both their nation and the global community.
- e. To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession

National Integration and Roles of Teachers in the 21st Century.

The 21st-century roles of teachers and national integration. "The encouragement of the spirit of inquiry and creativity in teachers, and providing them with the intellectual and professional background that will be adequate for their assignments and also make them adaptable to changing situations" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) is one of the objectives of setting up teachers' education in Nigeria. The policy stated in section 8b, item 74 that instructors should be regularly

exposed to innovations in their field and that teacher education should keep up with changes in curricula and methodologies. Furthermore, several academics have questioned whether the National Policy on Education's objectives for teachers' 21st-century readiness can still be sustained in their studies (Obanya, 2004 and Ololube, 2006).

The globalization trend and the rise of economic instability in the twenty-first century have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the educational system and the responsibilities that teachers play in it. The ability to offer greater possibilities for Nigerian children to develop stronger competencies through high-quality schooling will determine how they respond to the and many other difficulties (Fakoya, 2009). In addition to globalization, other issues including the quickening pace of technology development, evolving work schedules, and the expansion of information availability and consumption all underscore the necessity of teaching 21st-century skills. The need for building 21st-century skills is further justified by specific African-related difficulties and problems, such as poverty, the digital divide, diseases, environmental degradation, illiteracy, changes in family and community interactions, etc., and knowledge in future leaders and professionals of the world.

Research on teacher education revealed that most recently hired instructors seldom begin their professions with the breadth of knowledge and the strong set of abilities required to address the diverse range of students in their classes (Desveaux & Guo, 2011; Goddard, 2013; Schneider, 2007). Training for teacher candidates reveals that many lack the professional skills and theoretical knowledge necessary to effectively engage students and help them become global citizens who can contribute to the creation of a more just, peaceful, and environmentally secure world (Merryfield, 2000; Pike, 2008; Reimer & McLean, 2009; Weber, Evans, MacDonald, & Ingram, 2013). Inadequate comprehension of the process of cultivating teacher candidates' professional capacity in teaching global citizenship has been identified as a key challenge across teacher education programs in Canada and around the world (Devlin-Foltz, 2010; Noddings, 2005; O'Sullivan & Pashby, 2008; Sears & Hughes, 2006; Shultz, Abdi & Richardson, 2011; UNESCO, 2013).

The global change in the role of teachers is essential to improve sustainable education. Teachers are responsible for serving as facilitators for the learning of the students, also they are responsible for training the students to increase employability skills, expanding the mind, growing digital citizenships, critical thinking, and creativity as well as sustainable learning. Thus, the winning of the students is the win of the teachers. The global national integration has affected education and caused the emergence of changes in teachers' roles.

The Roles of Teachers in the 21st Century Teachers as a mentor and advisor

Teachers have a universal role, and in this globalized age, one of their main responsibilities is to foster student unity and help them make plans, particularly about professional choice. It follows that teachers will inevitably turn to advice and counseling. In this situation, a teacher will typically become an avid planner to accommodate each student's unique needs. Teachers should assist students in selecting a career path that will allow them to pursue a variety of employment opportunities that are not exclusive to members of specific racial or cultural groups. The major goal of this is to encourage national integration and provide opportunities for people to connect in some capacity.

Teachers as the Pinnacle of Wisdom.

Regardless of culture or race, a teacher's primary responsibility is to transfer knowledge. This is a challenge for national integration since educators at all levels are supposed to act as knowledge

repositories from which specific students can draw knowledge-boosting information. Since the advent of information and communication technology, the globalization period has seen daily innovation. According to research by Pulkkinen (2007), the development of information and communication technology has had a significant impact on the ways that higher education's teaching and learning are conducted. Additionally, Volman & Van Eck (2001) believe that the use of ICT can change the teaching and learning process and provide strong learning environments, enabling students to engage with knowledge in an active, constructive, and self-directed manner.

Teachers as Social Harmony Promoters

A nation's people come together as a result of national integration. The only way this works is by making their social tie stronger. It promotes tolerance, peace, and fraternity among them. Social connection has been fostered in schools in a variety of methods, particularly by teachers at higher education institutions. For instance, the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) actively promotes national unity through social participation and exchanges at the state and federal levels. Thus, according to the profession's history, a teacher is anyone who is trusted by the state or society to care for the young and newcomers to the community to instill the culture and the goals and aspirations of the group, based on his abilities, knowledge, and moral character. As an elite, a teacher in a multiethnic community should be open-minded to promote stability and innovation for the advancement of the country.

Teachers as Facilitators of Socialization

Haralambos & Holborn (2004) define socialization as the "process by which individuals acquire or learn the culture of a society." According to them, culture is the set of beliefs, practices, and knowledge that societies acquire, pass down, and pass on from one generation to the next. Nigeria is a divided nation due to differences in ethnicity, religion, and historical heritage. Every Nigerian community has unique customs and methods of doing things. Thus, educators serve as the focal point for promoting national integration to reconcile disparities in people's racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds as well as their overall worldview. One strategy used by the teacher to fulfill this function is to stay up to date on the national ideals, customs, and ethos that everyone must adhere to. It is important to teach students to be tolerant of one another despite differences. According to Nwabuisi (2002), all groups in the country and outside share some values and standards, such as respect for authority and achievement, human life, honesty, merit, and hard effort. Teachers have a responsibility to uphold or positively reinforce these characteristics to support national integration.

Teachers as Builders of the Nation

Teachers are among the great architects of our nation. It is impossible to overstate the importance of teachers in social integration and national growth. Nigeria's national constitution lists equality, internal harmony and unity, and national integration as categories. It also lists Nigeria's educational goals, which are: democracy, egalitarianism, self-reliance, dynamism, and a land full of opportunities (FRN, NPE 2013). By bridging barriers between the groups through instructional strategies, teachers everywhere could greatly contribute to the integration of various ethnic groups (Eze, 2000). These techniques could include fieldwork, assignments, debates, Q&A sessions, and democracy in the classroom. By assigning homework, holding debates, and organizing extracurricular activities, teachers can foster national unity and integration among their students. By creating small, familial-oriented communities in the classroom, educators may contribute to the development of the nation.

Teachers as social change agents

Innovating and bringing about social change in the community is one of the main purposes of education; education cannot occur without teachers. Nigeria's educational system transitioned from a traditional to a Western one with the arrival of European missionaries, colonial teachers, and reformed slaves. As discoveries in science and study revealed new realities, and as knowledge circulated through educational institutions, there were significant shifts in both moot practices and beliefs. Like this, highly knowledgeable instructors influence their pupils' evolutionary societal changes through the subjects they teach and the information they spread. Through their attitudes, abilities, and knowledge, teachers' observations of changes in the classroom have extended beyond school boundaries into the community in which they live and work.

Conclusion

Education is a tool for bringing about change and promoting national unity. Teachers are essential to the spread of ideas and knowledge. In addition to offering a realistic assessment, the new assessment approaches will give learners the uncommon chance to improve on their initiative inside the current system. For a teacher, though, things are not as gloomy. Basic education and national integration are fundamentally based on the value of teachers and the roles they play in the educational process. Teachers play a key role in bringing about change, fostering national integration, and fostering tolerance for pupils' diversity. Teachers have a great deal of responsibility as they shape the brains and character of the next generation, with an emphasis on modern innovation and advancement that is necessary for the twenty-first century. Thus, regardless of disparities in racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, among other factors, the training of teachers in Nigeria is and ought to be the cornerstone of national integration of education at all levels.

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