

# Education For Security And National Integration In Nigeria: The Indian Experiences

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*Abstract: Nigeria as a nation is faced with serious security challenges in the form of ethno- religious crises, armed robbery, human trafficking, kidnappings, political assassinations and many other related problems. The dimension taken by most particularly ethno-religious crises in the contemporary period is very serious and capable of not only dragging the country into civil or religious War, but dissolving the country as a sovereign and united nation. This paper stresses the central role education occupies towards the development of any nation and in particular, addressing the contemporary challenges of security and national integration. It is the argument of this paper that using the Indian approach of employing education as a medium of addressing the challenges of security and national integration, the best option and will provide more permanent solution to contemporary Nigeria's predicament. The paper therefore examines how India took radical steps and re-structured it's curriculum and school programs which made them capable of addressing the challenges of national integration and therefore recommends same, for Nigeria. Unless these measures are adopted, the country will not permanently address its contemporary challenges of security and national integration.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In most advanced countries, education is not only a tool for national Development, but a medium of effecting whatever meaningful change a nation desires. This cut across the socio-economic, ideological, political as well as the societal re-orientation and mind-set of its citizens.

India and Germany provide us with a very good example of how education could be made a tool for peace and national integration, just in a like manner, United States of America and Japan responded to the challenge posed by Russian sputnik through their education systems. (Yabo, 2008: A75).

A nation's schools are an organ of its life, whose special function is to consolidate its spiritual strength, to maintain its historic continuity, to secure its past achievements, to guarantee its future. Through its schools a nation should become conscious of the abiding sources from which the best movements in its life have always drawn their inspiration. (Nunn cited by Ross, 1971: 200-2001).

In Nigeria however, education has not yet occupied its rightful position as the pivot and prime mover of all spheres

and social structures of human endeavor. In fact, even in our development plan and programs, education is not recognized as a prime mover.

It is mostly seen as something which could be assisted by a particular development programme, not an indispensable too! For the success of that particular development programme. The Obasanjo National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS), 2004; The Yar'aduwa vision 2020 of 2007 and Jonathan Transformation Agenda of 2010 are clear examples. For instance, the ambitious vision 2020 did not even saw the need to include educationists in its steering committee charged with the responsibility of initiating and drawing a blue print for the vision, not to talk of recognize education as the medium through the vision could be achieved. (Kwaire, 2009:531).

This paper stresses the central role education occupies towards the development of any nation, and in particular, addressing the contemporary challenges of security and national integration, drawing lessons from the strategies adopted by India, when faced with similar problems.

## II. ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CRISES AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: A THREAT TO NATIONAL INTEGRATION

The 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigeria is facing serious security challenges of an unprecedented kind. The challenges include ethno-religious crises, armed robbery, human trafficking, political assassinations, riots, kidnappings and many other related problems that are threatening the peaceful and harmonious coexistence in the country as well as the continued survival of Nigeria as one indivisible sovereign nation. In particular, ethno-religious crises are the most serious threat to the future survival of Nigeria as a united country.

Nigeria has recorded several ethno-religions crises in the country. Some of the widely known records of ethnic and communal crises in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigeria include the Kaduna and Jos-Plateau crises, the TIV - Jukun conflict, the Ijaw- Itsekiri feuds, the Urhobo-Itsekiri and Urhobo-Ijaw inter-ethnic fracasas among others (Dagana, 2008:569). In addition to these crises groups and organizations such as Afenifere and the Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC) in south-West (i.e. Yoruba land), the Arewa consultative form in the North, the Ohaneze Indigbo and the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB), in the South East, the Middle Belt forum, the Niger Delta Forum and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Taliban Group in the North East and a host of other related associations, championing the cause of their respective separatist nationalism, are not only promoting inter-ethnic and religious crises in Nigeria, but are seriously threatening the harmonious co-existence and future survival of Nigeria. He further cautioned how identity related violence or ethnic cleansing ruined Yugoslavia's nationhood by the (Serbian-Bosnia) Kosovo conflicts. While it devastated Chechnya, Burundi, Rwanda and Liberia. Currently, he added, Spain, Turkey, Sudan, Kenya, and Zimbabwe are paying heavy prizes for it. (Dagana: 2008: 570).

In fact, the worst part of the whole issue is that most of these groups and organizations identified by Dagana, are separatist in outlook. They are seriously promoting the wide spread resurgence of sub-national, anti-national ethnic and communal consciousness and identity, challenging and rejecting the federal government trying to make con-Federal arrangement or break away from it altogether. (Sifawa and Shehu, 2009: 169: 170).

In recent times, the *Boko Haram* crisis is fueling the serious tension and conflicts already existing in different parts of the country, particularly in the North. Only in July this year, there were several bombings, reprisal and counter attacks in the country. A part from the losses of lives and properties, *Daily Sun News" Paper* recorded how multiple bomb blast in June this year provoked counter and reprisal attacks in some parts of Kaduna and Plateau States.

In addition, there are further threats by Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in the South East and Niger Delta Militants in the South-South to attack Muslim leaders and community in the country (Daily Sun of Tuesday, June, 12: Wednesday, June 20: Thursday, June 21 and Friday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012, pp. 6-7 respectively).

It should also be noted that, in October last year, a Warn based Militant group known as Egbesu Mightier Fraternity issued 7 days ultimatum for the Muslims to vacate Niger Delta or else be massacred because of what they described as *Boko Haram*, merciless bombings in the country (Egunyanga, 2011:2).

Despite the complexities in the nature of the *Boko Haram* crisis, the problem is a very serious threat to both peaceful co-existence and survival of Nigeria as a united country. The *Boko Haram* crisis as indicated above is highly complex in nature. The complexity of the crisis could be acknowledged not only in the way and manner highly sophisticated explosive devices are used, but the involvement of some non-Muslims in the bombings. In addition, going by the principles of '*Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnati Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad*', otherwise referred to as "*Boko Haram* by media, their attacks was initially directed against government, not necessary non-Muslims in the country. This is more so when it is realized that there are certain established principles and conditions in Islam, before embarking on Jihad. Whatever the case, *Boko Haram* existed, and their main objective is to restore *Shari'ah* or Islamic legal system in Northern Nigeria as they were quoted at different times by Nigerian media.

As long as crises of this nature continued, the possibility of civil or religious war is not doubtful by any Nigerian. In addition the crises can easily lead to disintegration of Nigeria. Already some good friends of Nigeria under the leadership of the former U.S. Ambassador have predicted 2015 as the time bomb for Nigeria. In any case, the Federal government must take the right action if really the leadership is interested in salvaging the country from total disintegration.

## III. ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION: THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE

During the early stage of educational reconstruction in India, emphasis was on vocational education. The National Committee of Basic Education, under the chairmanship of Dr. Zakir Hussain in 1937 was the first indigenous attempt at educational reconstructions in India. According to Zakir Hussain, apart from democratic citizenship, the education system designed for India, places emphasize on crafts and vocational skills.

An education, which produces, drags and parasites-whether rich or poor-stands condemned. It not only impairs the productive capacity and efficiency of the society but also engenders a dangerous and immoral mentality. This scheme is designed to produce workers, who would took upon all kinds of useful work-including manual labor even scavenging as honorable, and who would be both able and willing to stand on their own feet, (emphasis mine) (Aggarwal, 2008: 261 and 270-271).

In fact, philosophies of Mahatma Gandhi and Zakir Hussain on crafts and vocational education influenced the Indian education very considerable indeed. Although the scheme was not without success, it however failed to address the problem of national unity and integration in India. This could best be understood by how ethno-religious struggle led to the establishment of Pakistan and Indian republic, at

independence in 1947. Moreover, even with the separation of Pakistan, predominantly Muslim, and India predominantly non-Muslim, ethno-religious crises were not addressed. Thus, the post-independence India witnessed an increased ethno-religious struggle that threatened the unity of the country. (Aggarwal, 2008:320).

Responding to these challenges, India set up various committees to re-strategize education in addressing these challenges facing the country. The 1952/1953 Secondary Education Commission; the 1961 Committee on Emotional Integration, and the 1964 Education Commission were among the bold steps taken to re-strategize education towards making it a tool for national integration in India.

The secondary education commission, 1952-1953 was setup to address the democratic needs of post-independent India. The commission made recommendations for bringing about reforms in the curriculum to make it capable of meeting the country's challenges. The committee recommended a core curriculum at higher secondary stage in which different school subjects were recommended side by side with vocational and technical education. The four broad aims the curriculum was designed to achieve were:

✓ Development of democratic citizenship. This includes all the necessary skills, abilities, ideas and qualities necessary for effective citizenship in democratic India. Among the qualities highlighted include rational ability, broadness of heart and mind, eloquence, love, tolerance and understanding, development of true patriotism and ability of an individual to realize the fact that various groups and communities existed with different backgrounds and world views, and thus get prepared mentally and emotionally to live in peace, and of use to humanity were equally stressed. Despite the significance of the recommendations made by the secondary education commission, government was not able to fully implement them. Impliedly, the country's problems could not be addressed (Aggarwal, 2008:36-38 and 353-354).

As a result of persistence of divisionism and parochial group interests promoting ethno-religious discontent in India, a Committee on Emotional Integration was appointed by the ministry of education under the chairmanship of Dr. Sampurnand in 1961. The terms of reference for the committee were: (I). to study the role of education in considering and promoting the process of emotional integration in national life and to examine the operation of tendencies which come in the way of their development.

✓ In the light of such study, to advise on the positive educational programme for youth in general and students in schools and colleges in particular to strengthen them in the process of emotional integration.

The committee came-out with many recommendations on the ways education could be made, not only a tool for political integration, but emotional integration of the Indian people. Emotional integration means a feeling of oneness which may transcend all groups or cultural differences and synthesize the different castes, linguistic and religious communities emotionally into a compact whole. It is that cementing force that binds the citizens of a country in unity. Some of the committee's recommendations however includes: -

✓ Re-orientation of curriculum. The school and college curriculum should be reoriented to suit the needs of the secular state. At the primary stage, poems, folklore and teaching of social studies, national anthem and other national songs, should find an important place. At the secondary stage the curriculum should include the study of language and literature, social studies, moral and religious instruction and co-curricular activities. At the University level the study of different social sciences, languages and literature, culture and art and also the exchange of teachers and students should find place in the curriculum.

✓ Co-curricular activities capable of creating group feeling of oneness and brotherhood, broaden the outlook and develops a catholicity of spirit and tolerance which are necessary for good citizenship,

✓ Special stress on the teaching of social studies. The teaching of social studies at all levels i.e. primary secondary and university stage would impart knowledge of the geographical, historical and cultural background of the country and of the world as a whole. Books on social studies should include references to the lives and works of the great men of India and of the world and also stories from ancient books like the Mahabharata.

✓ Textbooks: In order that the text-books play their legitimate role in strengthening emotional integration, it is necessary that they be re-oriented and improved. In the preparation of History text-books special care needs to be taken to see that facts are not misrepresented, distorted or exaggerated to create prejudice.

There were many other suggestions on core-curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Many policies were however recommended in order to redress the divisionism and discriminatory tendencies in the country. (Aggarwal, 2008: 279 and 32-325). The commission suggested an increased teachings, research and public talks on the teaching of various religions in the country in order to promote understanding, tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

Moreover, 1964-1966 Education commission on promotion of National consciousness emphasized the need for religious tolerance. The commission recommended the introduction of religious education, to educate Indian citizens about major religions up to the first degree level. Emphasis should be given on certain fundamental values encouraged by major religions. However, organization of common school system, organization of social and national service programs, development of community life and participation and involvement of students in activities and programs of national reconstruction were among the suggestions made by the commission. (Aggarwal, 2008:279-280 and 325).

On the whole, the Indian government recognizes the central role education plays in the promotion of peace and national integration. As a result, bold steps were taken and their education system was re-directed towards ensuring peace and national integration. Consequently, apart from technological and economic development, there is peace, security and unity in the modern India.

#### IV. TOWARDS MAKING EDUCATION A TOOL FOR SECURITY AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

As earlier noted, there are enormous challenges of security and national integration in Nigeria. To redress these challenges and re-position Nigeria as a peaceful, strong and united sovereign nation, all hands must be on deck. It requires the participation of all and sundry. In particular, the school system, the curriculum the country imparts on its citizens and the entire media of socialization in the country need to be re-positioned to make them capable of attaining such lofty goal. Unfortunately for Nigeria, the country's leadership is yet to recognize the centrality of education as the best medium through which security and National integration could be provided in the country. On the contrary, the country having experienced a long period of military dictatorship is still using military and totalitarian approach to address unity and security issues.

For instance, ministry of defense got the highest share from this year's budget with almost one fifth of the entire budget devoted towards addressing the security challenges in the country. Ironically, the education sector is not considered as a medium through which security challenges could be addressed. Little wonder therefore, even the recent National Policy on Education, (2004) revised edition has made no attempt to re-position education as a tool for addressing security challenges in the country and promoting unity. What only existed are unqualified statements in the form of Nigeria's philosophy of education and the national educational goals, on the inculcation and promotion of national unity. But well into the curriculum content, which shall help attain such objectives, no attempt has been made to include these educational experiences capable of promoting peace and unity in the country. Instead, emphasis has only been in the promotion of vocational and technical education. In addition quite a number of school subjects such as history, social studies and religious education, the disciplines that are capable of promoting understanding, tolerance, peace and national unity are given lower hand position, as elective subjects. (FRN.2004 6-8 and 14-24).

It is important at this juncture to note that, no body is in doubt concerning the significance of vocational and technical education in the socio-economic development, not the least, helping to address the issues of unemployment and poverty in the country. But time without number, educationists drew the attention of particularly Nigerian government on the need to promote art, humanities and social sciences, side by side with science and technical education (Junaidu, 1985:13-17). However, development of rational thought, knowledge of the experiences that had shaped and will continue to shape the life of various groups and communities, understanding, tolerance, unity and peaceful coexistence could only be achieved through the social science and humanities, particularly history in its broader perspective (Bernal, J.D., 1969:1017-1022).

The point being made here is that, science, technical and vocational skills can improve material wellbeing of the society, but it lacks basic ingredients capable of promoting healthy understanding of different ethnic, cultural and religious groups as well as tolerance, peaceful co-existence

and unity. These can only be promoted through history and other related disciplines.

Today, Nigeria has started paying for the price of neglecting history and related disciplines in favour of science and technology. The parochial curriculum which promotes vocational and technical education at the expense of history succeeds in disseminating some rudiments of science and technology among Nigerian citizens. But having not assisted by that curriculum to understand the reality of human life and develop in them tolerance and sympathy to diverse socio-cultural and religious groups in the country, the result has been to use that acquired science and technical skills into making local explosive devices to destroy each other. The true fact of the matter is that the government left the responsibility of imparting that aspect of knowledge to ethnic and religious groups and by extension the wider society. The result has been manipulating that chance into promoting parochial group feelings, sentiments and prejudices against fundamental values of love, tolerance, peace and harmonious coexistence. An average northerner will be made to know that his southern counterparts are his enemies who marginalized him and enjoy the highest share of the country's resources, and the vice versa. Similarly, Christians are made to believe that an average Muslim northerner is wild and thirst of 'blood whose agenda is to finish the entire Christians in the country. In addition, corrupt political elites, particularly through their print media shoulders the highest responsibility of promoting the contemporary crises in the country. This further reveals the limitations of our education system because, western educated elites are more tribalistic and ethnocentric, unlike the so-called non educated class, particularly he commodity traders. Today many Hausa, Nupe and Fulani merchants

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non educated class, particularly the commodity traders. Today many Hausa, Nupe and Fulani merchants naturalize and inter-married with their host community in the southern Nigeria, unlike the so-called elites who continue to promote ethnic stereotypes, prejudice and ethnic crisis in the country. (Kwaire, 2001: 1-15).

Having experienced a long period of military dictatorship, Nigerians are deeply ingrained with military mentality, and therefore apply military approach to solve issues that shall supposedly be addressed using certain democratic principles of enlightenment, dialogue, love and fraternity. The *Boko Haram* problem, for instance, started as a religious and intellectual affair among Islamic scholars. There were over fifty different dialogues and engagements between late Muhammad Bin Yusuf, the leader of Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnati lidda'awati wall jihad (Boko Haram) and various scholars in Nigeria. Interestingly, however, late Muhammad bin Yusuf continued to accept some weaknesses of his stance, and gradually soften his hitherto rigid position. Unfortunately, the military approach employed by the federal government with its resultant brutality and the assassination of this group leader together with many of his followers contributed greatly in changing the political atmosphere in the country.

From historical perspectives, *Boko Haram* is not a new phenomenon in northern Nigeria. It all falls under the wide and general resistance to colonial domination and culture, as well as suspicion against the agency and medium through which western education was introduced in Nigeria. But for the colonial regime they succeeded in making a lot of modifications to the system in order to encourage its acceptance within the Muslim community. But unfortunately for the post-independence leadership, they never listen to issues and respond logically. They remain rigid and not willing to compromise. The worst part of the whole thing is that people with a true understanding of issues are not provided chance to render necessary advice.

On the general identity related conflicts in Nigeria, government on its part must ensure justice and patriotic leadership as well as review its education system to make it capable of addressing the challenges of security and national integration. The simple arithmetic is that government says she want peace and national integration in Nigeria. Therefore, she must devise ways of extending peace and love messages to the citizens. Actually the education sector is the best medium through which these messages could be disseminated, alongside other auxiliary mediums.

## V. CONCLUSION

Practically, Nigeria has not yet recognized education as a pivot and central tool of promoting unity and peaceful co-existence in the country.

India provides us with a very good example when faced with similar challenges. She responded through her education system. Their curriculum which earlier on prioritized crafts

and vocational education was modified, a lot of history education was incorporated in the form of social studies at primary /basic education level. History curriculum at higher level was equally re-structured and made capable of promoting peace and emotional integration. For Nigeria to succeed in her struggles towards permanently addressing security challenges, education must be given its rightful position. This could best be done through the contents and subjects taught to students in Nigerian schools.

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