

# Intercultural Education and National Development In Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The importance of intercultural education in fostering national development in Nigeria cannot be underestimated. The critical need for peaceful cohabitation among Nigeria's various ethnic groupings can only be achieved through a strict implementation and practice of intercultural education which will lead to the achievement of a sustainable national development in Nigeria. Intercultural education aimed at promoting the culture of tolerance, respect for human rights and justice among various ethnic and linguistic groups which exist in the present day societies such as Nigeria. National development cannot be at its peak when there is no intercultural understanding and education in Nigeria. No society is ethnically pure without humans from diverse ethnic groups; therefore, conscious effort must be made to promote diverse cultures and languages through the development of appropriate knowledge, skills, values and competence necessary for a sustainable nation building and all round development. The introduction of intercultural education became very important into the national school curriculum to curb the problems of communal clashes as a result of diverse interest in culture which hampered the overall progress of our nation and non-effectiveness of the Nigerian citizenship development process. The best place and way to impart the fundamentals of intercultural education to students is in the classroom. To put it another way, all school curricula ought to include subjects like history, geography, drawing, music, literature, and languages, among others. Important ideas and knowledge concerning intercultural education and its function in national development should be covered in such course material. For effective nation-building and development, it is crucial that all education stakeholders pay more attention to intercultural education. This research attempts to investigate the relationship between intercultural education and national development in Nigeria against this backdrop.*

**Keywords:** Intercultural Education; National Development; National Consciousness

## Introduction

It is obvious that Nigeria as a nation is rich in both human and abundant natural resources. Irrespective of this characteristic, due to the multiple political and social vices pervasive in the system, Nigeria is still referred to as a destabilised and failing nation, Dania and Emuebie (2012) & Ajiboye et al., (2018). Nigeria as a nation is witnessing systematic failure in political, socio-economic, inter-ethnic group, cooperation, discrimination, nepotism, unemployment, diversity of culture misunderstanding, religious intolerance causing intra and inter-religious violence, intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts.

According to the second National Development Plan (1970-1974), Nigeria is still far from achieving a united, free and democratic society and the citizens are yet to have or gain fully the quality or characteristics of effective citizenship required for attaining a country's dream of national development. The alarmingly high rates of poverty, starvation, unemployment, and insecurity across all sectors of the Nigerian economy can be linked to leaders' excessive ambition, willful human greed, and the "winner takes all" mentality. It is not surprising that Nigeria is one of the most corrupt nations in the world, according to Dania and Emuebie (2012) and Fry (2018), and that corruption is one of the biggest obstacles to national growth. For instance, when funds meant for judicious use are embezzled and diverted to suit personal interest and nothing is done to the interest of the nation, then there will be no sustainable national development.

The biggest obstacle to promoting national development might be viewed as corruption. Truth, rectitude, honesty, discipline, the proper attitude towards labour, courage, and national consciousness are examples of the moral standards that have been established to keep a community cohesive (Dania and Emuebie, 2012; Egbule & Olori, 2021). It is better and stronger when any country holds on to this norms and values, and worse and weaker for any country or society when they deviate from this norms and values because they form the bed rock of any societal development. Okafor & Chinonyelum (2021) stated that, "there has been a dramatic surge in xenophobic expression, hardening of ethno-regional position and the proliferation of ethnic militant that have unleashed varying degrees of violence in Nigeria". Madueke (2018) reported that the Bantunisation policy in northern Nigeria was associated with ethnic and religious cleansing of communities, groups and individuals.

In other words, diversity in ethnic groups has been a leading cause of intra and inter-communal conflicts, inter-religious clash, inter-cultural discrepancies, discrimination and disregard for intercultural values, and if not handled with care, it can lead to anarchy in the state and in the long run causing hindrances to national development. Contrarily, development is the process of bringing about growth, progress, positive change, and the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social, and demographic

components, all of which can be attained through intercultural education. Intercultural education is thus an instrument for Nigerian national development. The goal of development is to raise and improve the standard of living for people in a society.

In addition to improving the standard of living for the populace, development also attempted to provide employment and income opportunities while preserving the environment's natural resources. In other words, by providing individuals the freedom to engage in economic, social, and family activities without restriction, development may be seen as a tool that enables people to perform to the best of their abilities. In order to foster unity among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, including linguistic and religious groups which is estimated at over 300 (Osakwe, 2017) measures have to be taken in order to inculcate into the learner right from the pre-primary education level, the Nigerian school child is expected to learn the social norm of the society and develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit. At the primary level, the child is to be given citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in contribution to the life of the society (Schulz et al., 2018).

The policy document also stressed that for the secondary education, the specific goals for the Nigerian child should include:

1. Developing and promoting Nigerian languages and culture in the context of the world's cultural heritage.
2. To foster national unity with emphasis on the common ties that unite Nigerians in its diversity.
3. To raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labor, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals and live as good citizens.

Adegboyega (2021) explained that other strategies like inter-state visits, school excursions by students, the establishment of "unity schools" at the secondary level in most states of the federation; the orientation of federal tertiary institutions as instruments for cementing national unity and creation of national consciousness through inter-ethnic hostel accommodation, quota admission policy and National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme are some of the various measures for achieving national unity, national consensus and national consciousness which are some of the foundations for national development. However, it is obvious that in spite of the above strategies towards national development, projects are yet to be given full attention; it is a clear fact that much are yet to be covered in solving the nation's problems in order to achieve national development in its fullness.

### **National Development, Intercultural Education and Effective Citizenship**

**Theoretical Consideration:** According to Ogbeide (2021) "nation building", national integration and national unity are used interchangeably in literature to mean intentional efforts of people with diverse culture to neglect cultural diversities and embrace cultural similarities among them in order to live peacefully together and build the nation together. To buttress the notion stated above, various approaches were identified to attain a sustainable national development through intercultural education. They include:

1. Structural approach
  2. Cultural approach
  3. Marxian approach
1. Structural approach posits that a nation must be integrated by giving attention to the developmental needs of all its constituent parts in order to avoid confusion, crises and breakage of any of its part without affecting other parts. And that the unity here should be both vertically and horizontally related people groups such as interaction between guilds, religious, and ethnic nationalities and communities Handley & Mathew (2020).
  2. Cultural approach is of the view that a nation must de-emphasize cultural differences and encourage cultural assimilation; that is no part of the society being culture, norms, languages or values should be neglected and as such the rights and personalities of every factor that makes up the society should be duly recognized and accorded with the desired or required respect in order to attain a sustainable national development in economic, socially, politically, educationally and otherwise.
  3. Marxian approach on the other hand, emphasized that a nation's wealth should be distributed in a manner fair, just and equitable. This implies that every member of the various constituencies experiences the same economic challenges and for that reason, no preference should be given to any part of the nation while some other part is being neglected so that national unity, consciousness and national consensus will bring about development of our nation.

Due to the multicultural composition of every human society, for instance, in the Nigerian society where we have the Hausas, Yorubas, Igbos, Urhobos, Ijaws, Edos, Igarras, to mention but a few. Intercultural education must be promoted within the Nigerian context and globally as a medium of inculcating knowledge, skills, values and competence needed to understand, appreciate and respect what other individuals and groups has to contribute to the development or building of a just, free, united and democratic society.

### **The Place of Intercultural Education in National Development**

The main goals of intercultural education are to build intercultural communication skills, flexibility and adaptability, and to translate our awareness, attitude, and knowledge into competence. Possessing these qualities mentioned above will allow easy flow of communication among a multi-linguistic and multicultural group of people. Adaptability of other people's culture will help in fostering national unity, consciousness, integration and national interest as against the ideals of personal or group interest which can lead to or promote inter-group or inter-communal clash. Therefore, when this happens, there can be little or no meaningful national development due to divided interest of individuals in the society.

The concept of intercultural education refers to the way of thinking, a set of decision making criteria and a value orientation. That is to say, in intercultural education, there is room for social re-engineering of people. In order to obtain a sustainable national

development in Nigeria, the intercultural education must foster “culture of peace” as a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that rejects violence and prevents conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation.

### **Indices of Development**

According to Sari et al. (2017) a nation’s development can be measured using the “Human Development Index” (HDI). The Human Development Index calculates the average income, life expectancy, and degree of education for every nation on earth. Each country is given a score between 0 and 1 for this measurement or computation; the closer a country is to 1, the more developed it is. Other indicators include;

1. The percentage of persons who have access to safe and clean water.
2. The ratio of births to population in 1,000. Birth rates is believed to be high in a less developed country.
3. The fatality rate per 1,000 inhabitants. High death rates may be a sign of a developing nation.
4. Per capita gross national income. the amount of income a country receives divided by its population.
5. The number of infants per 1000 live births who do not live to be 0 to 1 years old.
6. Expectancy of life.
7. Rate of literacy.
8. Patients per physician.

### **Social and Economic Measures of Development- Aqa-Bbc Bitesize**

From the ongoing discussion, it is a truism that a nation’s development could mean:

1. The development of new ideas.
2. The state of being developed or projects in development.
3. A tract of land that has been made available or usable.
4. A developed tract of land especially one with houses built on it.

Through intercultural education, a multi-linguistic and multicultural nation like Nigeria will achieve sustainable development that will raise the entire standard of living of its citizens.

### **Approaches for National Development**

1. Educational project, a society requires active investment with the aim of bringing relationships between people who belong to different cultures, based on an “internationalist” perspective. This involves an effective planning for everyone, with equal opportunities on the paths of education, work and not only equal educational opportunities, but also equity and academic success for all students across the nation (Torres & Tarozzi, 2020). Through intercultural education, a nation’s academic success of its citizens can be guaranteed.
2. Political approach: This approach looks into the future and considers how to build the society in terms of education, coordination and direction of a collective project and the people who lives there. We must ask ourselves the foundational questions relating to what type of society we intend to build through the intercultural education orientation. (Duffy & Gallagher, 2017). In other words, intercultural education system is marked by democracy, pluralism and social justice and whenever these factors exist, there is room for development.

### **Problems That Affect the Attainment of National Development**

1. Leadership and followership problem
2. Ethnicity and regionalism
3. Negative value and attitudes
4. Corruption
5. Dependent economy
6. Political instability
7. Poverty and unemployment
8. Problems of crime and insecurity

In view of the above, it is obvious that in our Nigerian society today insecurity is one of the most difficult challenges to development in Nigeria. Apart from the fear of the unknown, every average Nigerian is living in fear of the known. The fear of falling victims of kidnappers, armed robbers, hunger, poverty, unemployment, bomb blast, herdsmen attack, Islamization, banditry, bokoharam raiding, ritual killing e. t. c. Nigeria's lack of security was demonstrated by the attack on the Owo Catholic Church on June 5, 2022, which claimed the lives of roughly fifty people. For Nigeria's civic life, the fear of the unknown can make things more difficult and incapacitating.

Another case of insecurities over natural disasters in Nigeria is the present flood crises claiming the lives and properties of citizens in the country today. For instance, people can no longer get to Port Harcourt through the Warri Port Harcourt road except they pass through Abraka, Onitsha and Owerri to Port Harcourt. Some people are prompted to discuss the early warning signs of state failure by this level of insecurity and the incapacity to successfully combat it. The incapacity of the government to provide basic services and protect people and property across a sizable portion of its area, according to Amaechi (2020), is a sign of state failure.

Conclusively, intercultural education plays an important role in developing skills for promotion and protection of human rights, environmental human rights, respect for other people's culture, peace, justice and equality, social cohesion and treatment of differences, national unity and national consciousness, social re-engineering and others which helps in the attainment of national development. Intercultural education aids in the development of rational and national thinking skills for practical social life, as well as the growth of a positive attitude towards other people and citizenship so that each citizen can do his or her part to advance the well-being of society and the development of the nation.

Therefore; the researcher hereby posits that more emphasis should be laid on intercultural education and value orientation should be given to students in order to contribute positively towards attaining national development in Nigeria.

#### Findings of the Study

1. The researcher found out that, there is not enough measures of strategies, towards the attainment of national development in Nigeria yet.
2. The researcher also found out from the study that intercultural education is an imperative need towards nation building that will help to attain national development.
3. The researcher found out that inter-cultural education brings about unity, tolerance and respect

#### Recommendations

It was recommended that:

1. Government should promote value and cultural awareness through intercultural education.
2. To enhance social interaction among citizens, through the teaching of national integration and intercultural understanding as this will help in national unity and peace which are fundamentals of development.
3. Government to put more efforts in national orientation programmes, such as the NYSC orientation, camps, unity schools and federal tertiary institutions, seminars and workshops on the ways of promoting national awareness and understanding through intercultural education.
4. Government should make adequate preparatory measures to overcome natural disasters and its effect on the lives and properties of the Nigeria citizens.
5. Government should embark on projects that will bring meaningful development to the economy.

#### Conclusion

The results led to the conclusion that the role of intercultural education in promoting national development in Nigeria cannot be undervalued. Only by the strict application and practise of intercultural education, which would result in the attainment of a sustainable national development in Nigeria, can the urgent demand for a peaceful coexistence among the many ethnic groups in Nigeria be met.

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