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**CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION  
AT NIGERIA'S CENTENARY: IMPLICATIONS  
FOR SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION**

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**Abstract**

Since 1914 when Nigeria became a political entity, the country has been witnessing a lot of challenges due to the multi-ethnic and cultural diversities of the nation. Most of the problems emanated from the attitude of the people to national issues and lack of patriotism, hence there is the need for harmonious co-existence among the citizens to promote peace and national integration. To this end, the paper adopted a descriptive approach to examine the issues constituting major challenges to national integration in the country. The study analysed, the political demonization, inequity in revenue allocation and ethno-religious crises among others which are responsible for lack of integration in the country. Consequently, it was suggested that the objectives of social studies education must be imbibed by the Nigerians and that total resolution of the national issues be embarked on to ensure national integration.

**Keywords:** National integration, Peaceful co-existence, Ethno-religious crises and Stability.

**Introduction**

One of the political challenges of Nigeria at centenary is the issue of national integration. Nigeria, like many nations is having its struggles and challenges of growth and development around the search for national integration among others. Nigeria as a multi-ethnic nation with diverse cultural groups that are about three hundred in number, thus laying a weak foundation for national integration (Jekayinfa, 2002).

Since independence, tension, fear, mutual suspicion, real attack and counter-attack have characterized ethnic co-existence and Nigeria's nationhood. This to a large extent has resulted in some people believe casting aspersions on the continuous corporate existence of the country (Okunade, 2014). It is instructive however to note that the problem of unhealthy ethnic and sectional rivalry with its attendant threat to sustainable national integration is not a recent occurrence. It started immediately after the amalgamation in 1914 when the three major ethnic groups of Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo at different times decried the amalgamation as a forced one that is incapable of achieving the desired unity (Anyawu; 1999, Kur; 2012).

Consequently, since the amalgamation Nigeria has been replete with conflicts in different forms. Thus, many Nigerians are now living in fear with no guarantee of security of lives and properties. Thus, aggressive and violent acts like ethno-religious crises, bombing and kidnapping have become the usual occurrence in Nigeria and this has consequently impeded national integration and unity in the country.

The various challenges which Nigeria is grappling with since 1914 have led to a state of confusion in all spheres (Ajiboye; 2010). The said confusion keeps on manifesting in different aspects of the nation which is encouraging disunity and instability. The basis of such conflicts have been located around the issues of tribalism, land disputes, resource control, ethnic domination, youth restiveness among others.

The phenomena of ethnicity and religious conflicts have given birth to many ethno-religious movements like the Oduá People's Congress (OPC), Bakassi Boys; Arewa People's Congress (APC); the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Boko Haram insurgent. These have gone a long way in plaguing national integration and challenges the socio-economic

and political progress of Nigeria as a polity.

In the light of the fore-going, this paper therefore focuses on how social studies education can help to solve the challenges of national integration at the country's centenary. Hence, the meaning of the concept of national integration, the various government efforts at achieving integration, challenges confronting the Nigerian polity and the roles of social studies in promoting national integration in the country will be examined in this paper.

### National Integration as a Concept

The concept of national integration is widely used to cover a wide range of phenomena and it is opened to a number of interpretations. Literally, integration involves bringing diverse parts or units together to operate as a single whole. Tiamiyu (1997) affirmed that national integration is the attempt at uniting or bringing together the hitherto multi-ethnic groups of people with diverse culture, histories, languages, religion and belief systems into one which would remove primordial and subordinate loyalties and sentiments to ethnic groups.

Eleazu (1977) defined integration as a "resocialization process into the symbols of the new large community to create people in the sense of those who, in the words of Karl Dentsch have learned to communicate with each other well beyond the mere interchange of goods and services. Sanda (1999) defined national integration as the collective orientation of members of a society towards the nation and its society in such a way that micro-loyalties are not allowed to jeopardize the continued existence of the nation and its objectives, goals and ideals.

However, Odetomi (2013) believe that national integration is commonly used to refer to specific problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality, which eliminates parochial loyalties. In this sense, it is generally presumed that there exists an ethnically plural society in which each group is characterized by its own languages or other self-conscious cultural qualities. Thus, integration is used here as opined by (Bamisaie, 2003) to refer to the tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating homogenous, progressive, reduction of cultural and regional territorial community.

It can be concluded from the foregoing that, the purpose of

national integration is to build a united and strong nation. Also, national integration can be seen as a process leading to political cohesion and sentiments or loyalty toward central political institution. Hence, it means attempts at unifying all the forces in the country in order to give the idea of one nation.

#### National Integration Efforts in Nigeria

In the effort for Nigeria to be integrated, many measures have been put in place starting from the beginning of the colonial era to the present post-colonial independence era. In the colonial era, efforts and measures taken include: The amalgamation of 1914 by Lord Lugard, Adoption of English language as the common lingua-franca, Common currency – the British pounds sterling, Common administrative system – Judiciary, Executive and Legislature, Common network of road transportation system, Common educational system, Common constitution, etc.

During the post-colonial era to date, the successive regimes had taken the following steps like Introduction of National Youth Service Corps Scheme, Establishment of Federal Government institutions such as the Command Schools, Federal Government Colleges, Federal Polytechnics, Federal Colleges of Education and Federal Universities, Introduction of federal character principle and Quota system for even representation, Adoption of the language of the three major ethnic groups as national languages, Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba, Creation of national symbols like Coat of Arm, National flag, National Anthem, National Pledge etc. Encouragement of sports, Arts and Cultural festivals.

However, despite the various steps that had been taken by successive government at promoting national integration in Nigeria since its existence. Many pitfall can still be identified. These include ethnic colouration and manipulation, culminating in ethnic violence across the country. In apparent reiteration of the foregoing, Tiarniyu (1997) attributed this to agitation for local government councils, land disputes, poverty, unemployment, economic marginalization that had led to ethnic clashes which had threatened the unity of the country. Prominent among the ethnic conflicts witnessed in the past are the Ife-Modakeke feud, the militant Niger Delta Youths which is common

between the Ijaw and Itsekiri in Warri, Zango-Kataf conflicts in Kaduna state, Jukun-Tiv conflicts, Yoruba-Hausa in Sagamu, Jos Riot in 2010 and the Fulani herdsmen continuous attacks in Jos among others. All these lead to wanton destruction of lives and properties.

Similarly, population-related issues such as revenue allocation accruing to states may have further generated disunity in the country. Associated with this is the issue of representation in the national assembly. This may not be unconnected with the fact that the more the population of a state, the more the representations of such state in the parliament. Again, the number of local government councils that will be created is a function of how populous a state is. Consequently population size has become a political issue in the country with leaders always wanting to inflate the population of their states for the purpose of benefiting from the national cake. Such attitude is inimical to national planning and development. Thus, development in the country may be lop-sided and unfair to the more populous states.

Power-sharing bothers on domination of the other ethnic groups by a particular ethnic group. In Nigeria, since independence, the issue of power-sharing has been a major problem confronting the country as there is the fear of political domination of the country by leaders from a particular tribe to the detriment and complaints from the other ethnic groups. Specifically, people from a particular ethnic group are believed to be dominating the other ethnic groups in the country, hence the people from the marginalized ethnic groups are thought to be inferior and subordinate to the dominant ethnic group (Olukoju, 2014). Arising from the above, many pro-democracy groups like the Campaign for Democracy and National Democratic Coalition Organisation (NADECO) were formed and they agitated for political restructuring of the entire political system to ensure that posts and appointments could be shared equally among all ethnic groups.

Although Nigeria is a secular state yet Nigerians still exhibit their religious intolerance as religious leaders claim their religious superiority over the other religions and they want to force their religion on other people. Many of the so-called "religious leaders" used their shallow knowledge to interpret the scripture to suit their selfish desire and they did this on the ignorance of their followers (Adebayo, 2003). This has led to many religious crises such as the 1980 Maitasine riot in

Kano, the Zango-Kataf riot of 1992, Bauchi religious riot of 1998 and the in Jos. In 2011, four youth corpsers were killed in Bauchi state while serving their fatherland by political thugs due to the aftermath of the 2011 presidential election (Raji and Ajibade, 2014). The Boko-Haram sect even gave an instruction that Christians should vacate Northern Nigeria within a specific period or they risked being killed if they are found in any part of the area. This religious intolerance is a serious threat to national unity which had prompted many religious riots that caused the death of many Nigerians (Oladiti and Gbadamosi, 2011).

Revenue allocation formula is a core-political issue in Nigeria bordering on the formula to be adopted in the allocation of revenue to every state of the federation. Since each state desires to get the lion share of the national revenue, the problem is the issue of equitable formula to be used in sharing the revenue to all the states which will allow for equity and fairness. While the people in the oil producing states of the Niger Delta would want the federal government to adopt the principles of derivation, the people from the North preferred population to be used in revenue allocation to the states. In spite of the fact that the oil producing states are being given special consideration in the revenue allocation, the issue of equitable formula to use in revenue allocation is threatening the national unity of the country as the formula being used presently is yet to be favourably accepted by the various ethnic groups in the country.

Arising from the few highlighted challenges militating against national integration in the country, there is the need to search for ways by which these problems can be solved and this paper is thus providing plausible solutions to achieving this objective through Social Studies education.

#### Social Studies and Promotion of National Integration

In a bid to promote national integration in the country, the objectives of social studies are highlighted.

1. To create a awareness and an understanding of our evolving social and physical environment as a whole in its natural, man-made, cultural and spiritual resources, together with the national use and conservation of these resources for national development;

2. To develop a capacity to learn and acquire certain basic skills including not only those of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and of calculation but also those skills of hand and head together with those of observation, analysis and inference which are essential to the forming of sound social, economic and political judgement;
3. To ensure the acquisition of that relevant body of knowledge and information which is an essential prerequisite to personal knowledge as well as to be a positive personal contribution to the betterment of mankind;
4. To develop a sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and interdependence of all members of the local community and the wider national and international community;
5. To develop in students positive attitude of togetherness, comradeship and cooperation towards a healthy nation, the inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hardwork, fairness and justice at work and play as one's contribution to the development of the national goals. (Adaralegbe, 1980).

These lofty objectives are those which Nigeria as a nation strives to attain for the purpose of promoting national integration. Social studies education is one of the tools with which these goals can be achieved.

The objectives of social studies education specify the kind of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that could be gained by the learners through the teaching and learning of the subject. Thus, if the objectives of Social Studies are disseminated and accepted by the Nigerians, the various challenges such as the ethno-religious crises, Boko Haram insurgency among others that are cog in the wheel of national integration in the country could be easily addressed.

Through the teaching of Social Studies, knowledge essential for worthwhile living in society are taught from the realities of the learners' environment. This makes the learners have better understanding of their environment and consequently, function in the environment more effectively. With the knowledge disseminated through Social Studies, most Nigerians as expected would thus realize the importance of all the ethnic groups uniting together and living together to

promote national integration.

Also as Social Studies stresses the development of thinking and decision-making abilities, critical thinking and the ability to analyse and solve problems, so with the skills learnt by the Nigerians, they will be able to take major decisions that would solve the challenges of national integration in the country.

Again, Social Studies strives to produce a functional and effective citizens that could help to improve the society better than he met it. This is done through finding solutions to the daily problems in the society. It is therefore assumed that with the skills being taught effectively in Social Studies, Nigerians would be able to realize that uniting together and seeing themselves as one and all the members of the various ethnic groups speaking with one voice would promote peace, unity and stability in the country. Consequently, national integration would be enhanced.

Social Studies teaches certain attitudes and values which are considered desirable for good citizenship. Values such as cooperation, comradeship, togetherness, honesty, hardwork and fairness are being stressed in Social Studies teaching. If Nigerians are able to imbibe these attitudes and values, they will be able to cooperate with one-another in solving the country's challenges. With this, the citizens will subsequently develop the spirit of comradeship that would make them see the country as theirs and thereby, promote unity among them.

Another important aspect of Social Studies is the inculcation of certain indispensable virtues in the citizens. This will help them to have the right attitude such as respect, self-discipline and honesty that would make them become worthy citizens of their country. Hence, if these indispensable virtues of worthy citizenship are inculcated by Nigerians, most of them would see good reasons why they should interact together and live peacefully under the same umbrella of a united country, thereby promoting national integration in the country.

Moreover, in addition to the promotion of international understanding among the citizens, Social Studies also promote the spirit of national cohesion among the members of the various ethnic groups in the country. Hence, the discipline emphasizes the need for oneness of human race by stressing the inter-dependence of people and nations throughout the world. If the spirit of national cohesion



among the citizens are imbibed, the Nigerians would see the need to unite in pursuance of the national objectives. With this, national integration would be achieved in the country.

### Conclusion

Arising from the foregoing, it can be concluded that most of the challenges of national integration highlighted in this paper are symptoms and consequences of divisions among the citizens. This is taking its toll seriously on peace, unity and national integration in the country. Of greater importance are the issues of ethno-religious crises and Boko-Haram insurgency which had generated unimaginable loss of lives and wanton destruction of properties. Inequalities in distribution of national resources among the populace makes it almost impossible for the citizens to see themselves as members of a more-united and integrated country. It makes the people unpatriotic and not always ready to defend the unity of the country.

Social Studies education as a school subject stands out in resolving the foregoing issues. Consequently, one can conclude that if the objectives of Social Studies education are imbibed by all Nigerians and if the students in schools that are taught Social Studies education put into practice the knowledge, skills and virtues they gained from the discipline, the people from the various ethnic-groups would be able to interact peacefully and see themselves as a member of an integrated country.

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