QUALITY EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR NATIONAL SECURITY, PEACE, AND INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated quality education as a solution for national security, peace, and integration in Nigeria. Variables such as security, peace and integration were considered to ascertain whether the problem associated with them could be resolved when the citizens acquire quality education. The paper adopted the content analysis method which is concerned with the review and critique of relevant academic literatures, this approach required the researcher to address the objectives of the paper. Secondary data drawn from the academic contributions of scholars and educational policy makers in textbooks, journals, government gazettes, public lecture notes, and the internet were used for this paper and also through direct observations of activities related to the paper. The construction of a research instrument and the use of descriptive or inferential statistics were not applicable. The study found that peace, national security, and integration can only be achieved in an environment where people have an understanding of peaceful coexistence which can only be achieved when the people are duly informed through quality education. The study concluded that when the citizens of a country are properly informed, educated and have proper acquisition of quality education, they cannot pose a threat to national security, peaceful coexistence, and integration in Nigeria. Based on these findings, it was recommended that Nigerian educational system should be reinforced to give the citizens at all levels of education the ingredients that will reconstruct their minds positively and equip them to exist peacefully as an integral entity.

Key words: Quality, Education, peace, security, National integration.
Introduction

The decadence of modern society has gradually crept into the nooks and crannies of our great country Nigeria. Quite disturbing is the escalating regimes of violence, problems of insecurity, religious and ethnic tensions, criminal activities; Yesterday was the menace called kidnapping but today is the deadly group called Boko Haram. Prior to these were the Niger Delta militants, the Egbesus from Bayelsa state, OPC from the west, the MASSOB from the east, the MASSOP of Ogoni land and all forms of political assassination, robbery, looting of government treasuries, fraudulent banking, consequently economic and social relationships drifts into a state of comatose in most cities which justifies the fears of many that the nation may not be able to navigate the storm of uncertainty glaring at it.

There is no country void of violence and crime but when a nation begins to have organised groups like the emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) and the Boko Haram which now exists as an extension of international trend; it informs us that the apparatus of the state for maintaining security, law and order is being threatened, secondly the need to seek the cause of the insecurity because when you get a situation where people carry arms irrespective of what they themselves will go through during the process, then you begin to wonder about the state of discontentment in such society; and when you analyze the age brackets of these criminals it also informs you about the rate of unemployment in the country that cannot accommodate her youths (Business Day 2012)

The 1999 constitution of Nigeria provides a legal framework of Nigeria’s national unity specifically section one under general provisions in part one state that Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state to be known as the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Also Section 14(1) of chapter 2 of the 1999 constitution captures the importance of security when it stated that security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of the government.

According to khan (1987) national security encompasses the totality of measures instituted by the government to protect the territorial integrity and cherished value and interest of people as well as guaranteed freedom of the citizenry from anxiety, threats to life and property and their safety from natural or man-made disasters.

Igbarma Otarok (2013) viewed peace as a state of harmony characterised by lack of violent conflict, commonly understood as the absence of hostility, existence of healthy newly healed
interpersonal or international relationship, prosperity in matters of social or economic welfare, establishment of equality and a working political order that serves the interest of all.

National integration spans the awareness of a common identity among the citizens of a country; though we belong to different castes, religions, culture and speak different languages, we recognise the fact that we are all one. This is important for building a strong and prosperous nation.

Today instead of forging a united front and presenting a concerted effort to face the challenges of development in an increasingly competitive and globalised world, Nigerians are busy waging ethnic, religious and political wars, struggling for control over resources, resisting marginalisation by dominant ethnic group and contending with diverse problems of basic survival (Ekanola 2006). Sadly the capacity of the states to contend with these challenges is below expectation contradicting the motto of the federal republic of Nigeria which states that there shall be unity and faith, peace and progress.

UNESCO in its preamble to her 2009 publication stated that since the war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that defence of peace must be constructed. This can only be achieved through quality education. Quality education plays a very important role in bringing about sustainable education which provides the learners with prerequisite knowledge, skills and values, attitudes and competencies to contribute meaningfully to Nigeria. National development can play a role in changing the mind of the individual from evil to good, from conflict to resolution of conflict, from war to peacemakers, when the people are properly informed they cannot pose a threat to the society they inhabit consequently the need for quality education to the people since it plays a vital role in bringing about sustainable peace and security in Nigeria as a whole.

Quality education has a direct bearing on national prestige, greatness, and cohesion. The knowledge and skills that young people acquire help determine their degree of patriotism and contribution to national integration and progress (Anasi S.N 2010). These situations on ground spurred the writers to examine if the challenges of peaceful co existence, insecurity, and lack of national integration in Nigeria can be resolved through equipping the people with quality education.
Concepts

Quality

The oxford advanced learners dictionary defines quality as the standard of something when it is compared to other things like it, how good or bad something is. It can also be defined as the degree of excellence.

Education

The federal government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development and the unambiguous declaration that “not only is education the greatest force that can be used to bring about redress, it is also the greatest investment that a nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources” (FGN 2004: 5-8) education is a tool that plays the role of changing the mind of an individual constructively since it provides the learners with prerequisite knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and competencies to contribute meaningfully to nation development.

Quality education

Quality education is a process through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well managed classroom, school, and skillful assessment to achieve learning and reduce disparities. It involves the use of system of inputs, infrastructures, pupil-teacher ratios and on curricular contents and also educational processes: how teachers and administrations use inputs to frame meaningful learning experience for students; their work represents key factors in ensuring quality school processes (UNICEF)

Quality in education does have a bottom line and that line is defined by the goals and values which underpin the essentially human activity of education (Bunting 1993). Quality education is achieved where educators include the relevant aims of education, have good subject balance, make good use of the available time, follow stipulated language policy, follow keenly on all the pedagogical approaches to improve teaching and make sure that learning is done from assessment.
Tiers and goals of Educational systems in Nigeria:

The tiers of educational system in Nigeria include: the Preschool, the basic, the secondary, and the tertiary Education.

Pre-school education

Pre-primary education is for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years or above. It lasts two to three years and attendance is not compulsory. It acts as preparatory and transition to primary education.

Primary education

Primary education lasts six years and caters for children aged 6-11. Basic education includes primary and junior secondary education. The universal basic education (UBE) involves a 6 years of primary school education and 3 years of junior secondary education culminating into a 9 years of uninterrupted schooling, transition from one class to another automatically but determined through continuous assessment. The scheme is compulsory and a right of every child. Therefore the UBEC law section 15 defines UBE as early childhood care and education. (UBEC 2012).

Goals of the basic Education programme include: Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotions; Providing free and compulsory universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age; Reduce drastically the incidence of early leaving from the formal school system; Catering for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education; Ensuring acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life- skills as well as the ethical moral and civic values for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning. (Orji S. N. 2012)

Secondary education

Secondary education is divided into two three-year cycles: junior secondary, culminating in the Junior School Certificate examination; and senior secondary, leading to the Senior School Certificate examination. The junior secondary school is both pre-vocational and academic designed to enable pupils acquire further knowledge and develop skills. Junior secondary
school graduates may enrol in technical colleges offering three-year programmes leading to the award of National Technical/Commercial Certificates.

The broad aim of secondary education within the overall national objectives is the preparation for useful living within the society and for higher education. Secondary education should: equip students to live effectively in the modern age of science and technology; raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, and live as good citizens; foster the Nigerian unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite within diversity; and foster the desire for achievement and self-improvement.

Higher Education

Higher education is provided by universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, as well as institutes that prepare students for professional courses such as accounting, law, architecture, and mass communication. The duration of studies ranges from three to seven years, depending on the nature of the programme. Colleges of education offer three-year programmes leading to the award of the National Certificate in Education. Polytechnics and colleges of technology award national certificates and diplomas, namely: the National Diploma, after two years of study following the senior secondary school; and the Higher National Diploma, awarded after a further course of two years’ duration. A Professional Diploma requires one additional year of study. At the university level, programmes leading to a first degree (e.g. bachelor's degree) should last not less than four years.

According to the National Policy of Education (2004), the goals of tertiary education are to:

Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training; Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society; develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments; Acquire both physical, intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society; Promote and encourage scholarship and community service; Forge and cement national unity; and Promote national and international understanding and interactions.
Arising from the goals of tertiary education, the National Policy of Education (2004), specifies that university education will make optimum contribution to national development by: Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation.

Security

Security as a concept is derived from the Latin word securus meaning to be safe, freedom from anxiety or fear, to be emotionally secure, affording grounds to be confident.

Dimensions of Security

There are different dimensions of security: Economic security, food, health, environmental, personal, community/national and political security. (UNDP 1994).

Human security is not concerned with weapons, it is concerned with human life and dignity (UNDP 1994), it is defined as an encompassing condition in which people, and communities live in freedom, peace and safely enjoy the protection of vital freedom. It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, buildings on their strength and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks, dignity, and livelihood, have access to resources and basic necessities of life and inhabits ones environment which is not detrimental to their health and well being.

National security means the process and act of effective protection of lives and property in a country. It involves policing and careful watch against elements that could breach peace or anything that can jeopardize the social, economic, and political development in the country (Odedele and Egotancoa 2010).

Peace

Peace is a state of harmony characterised by lack of violent conflict, commonly understood as the absence of hostility and war. Peace connotes a state of quiet, calm, repose, tranquillity, freedom from war and concord of ideas among different people (Oyebamiji, 2001). As a concept Ibeanu (2006) viewed peace from instrumental and functional, philosophical, sociological, political and process perspective. From the instrumentalists and functionalists, peace is a means to an end. On one hand the absence of war or violence serves the end of social progress and development, on the other hand peace is seen as playing a social function
and the product of the function of other social structures and institutions: that is the social function of integration. The philosophical defined peace based on the ideas of different philosophers but summarily as a natural original state of human existence. Sociologically peace refers to state of social harmony in which there is no social antagonism (no social conflict and individuals and groups are able to meet their goals, needs and expectations). Politically peace is a condition that makes justice possible. The process view sees peace as a process that involves the activities that are directly or indirectly linked to increasing development and reducing conflict both within specific societies and broader nations.

National Integration

National integration is the awareness of a common identity among the citizens of a country: it means that though we belong to different castes, religion, regions, speak different languages; we recognize the fact that we are one which is a very important ingredient for building a strong and prosperous nation. National integration is central to fostering cohesive security consciousness among citizens to guarantee territorial integrity while strategies employed for amicable reconciliation of contending interest within a social system is germane to attaining national ideals.

Today rather than integrating into a cohesive community with a common sense of national identity and destiny, citizens of Nigeria are returning more and more to primordial affiliation for identity, loyalty, and security (Ekanola 2006). To achieve national integration, the nation must pool human resources like cultural, religious, scientific, natural, educational etc to achieve oneness in all spheres of life of the citizens so that progress can be achieved; with progress the citizens can enjoy fruits of prosperity, happiness, living in harmony irrespective of the creed, language and cultural leanings professed by each as individual.

Possible causes of security challenges

1. The syndrome of a failing state which is characterized by national, food and job and social security.

   (a) national security: a failed state is measured by its inept or incapacity to protect the lives and properties of her citizens. The case of Boko haram is a case in point going by the recent statement credited by the head of state where he admitted that members of this sect have infiltrated into the government as it is now difficult to identify who the members are, he stated that some have found their ways into
different forces like police. Some dip hands with you and eat without you knowing who will point gun at you or plant bomb behind your house (business day 2012 p 6). The enemy is within the household.

(B). Food and job security: when a man can afford the basic needs of life, he is not likely to seek go about seeking for gun to kill people. A hungry man is an angry one as Prof. Sam Aluko of the blessed memory puts it “the poor cannot sleep because they are hungry and the rich can hardly sleep because the poor are awake. There is insecurity that is not physical violence this comes in the form of job insecurity, people go to work today, tomorrow they are told that they are out of job hence they are afraid because they do not know what tomorrow holds.(business day 2012).

(c) Social security: lack of basic necessities of life threatens the security of any nation a country that cannot provide constant electricity, good education, employment opportunities recreational facilities, good health care services and social welfare services is on the brink of national calamity and chaos

2. Bad governance: a good leader must have wisdom to discern and the strength to withstand pressures as demanded by his office, when corruption pervades the high places and stay, the citizens looses confidence in the governance and the consequence is better imagined than said.

3. Religious ideology: It is said that some people have used religion for evil purposes; some religious leaders seemed to have encouraged terrorism or support war either by their utterance or behaviour. (Goleman 2007). Some were raised to believe that others are animals that should be wiped out from the face of the earth; this is the evil of religious ideology.

4. Failed Family responsibilities: most homes fail in the area of discharging their responsibilities to the family members. The cause range from civilization to economic problems. When parents fail to discharge their duties in inculcate moral virtues and proper upbringing then the nation is in danger.

5. Weak Scholastic Education: a good number of our schools have lost their moral authority. The school takes most of the active hours of a child so if the school cannot inculcate moral virtues and sound academic knowledge in the children, then the society is at a loss. This explains why parents take time to decide the type of institutions where their children will attend as cultism and other vices seem to be the trend of the day.(Iwundu 2007)
Quality Education as an instrument for overcoming Security and other Social Challenges

Education is a milestone of every part of development. It provides all knowledge to do work with systematic way. It helps a nation in her economic, societal and personality development by providing large number of skills. Education creates awareness in the population that makes them self reliant and self dependant; it has the power to create stability and equality in different religion and people. According to the National Youth Development Policy 2001, the youths are the foundation of any society, their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation defines the pace of development and security of a nation. Through their creative talents and labour power, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. In their dreams and hopes a nation finds her motivation; on their energies she builds her vitality and purpose and because of their dreams and aspiration the future of a nation is assumed. The knowledge they acquire help determine their degree of patriotism and contribution to national integration and progress. Between 2000 and 2004 about 30 percent of Nigerian youths between 10 and 24 were not enrolled in secondary school (population Reference Bureau, 2006) perhaps the prohibitive cost of acquiring education was responsible; the after effect of this situation is that thousands of young people roam the street in cities in Nigeria. Those who managed to finish have no opportunities for tertiary education having being denied the chance to reach their potential, they are disoriented and readily available for anti social actions. Quality education which provides the learners with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and competencies to contribute meaningfully to their environment can play a great role in changing a perverse mind from good to evil, from conflict to resolution of conflict oriented and from being war minded to peacemakers; it leads to the total transformation of an individual. Well educated population lives with silence and calm, they love one another and believe in social community. Education is the key to human development. Illiteracy and half baked literacy are two sides of a coin that breed stupid ignoramus. If a man is properly schooled, imparted with sound moral and academic knowledge he will hardly be swayed into joining gangs therefore parents, schools, government, religious organizations, the mass media, and the society have a big role to play in this regard.
Implications for Educational Administrators

From the study, an implication of this study is that since quality education has direct bearing on national prestige, cohesion, and greatness; the administrators must ensure that the allotted annual budgetary allocation to education is judiciously used for rapid development; the national curriculum on education must be reconstructed to accommodate certain positive traditional values so as to make it functional.

Another implication of finding for the administrator is that the policy of eradication of illiteracy should be strictly adhered to, they should make practicable the educational objective which states that there shall be an equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels of education by striving towards free and compulsory education for the citizens and by not discriminating in admitting students into the universities based on the grounds of state of origin, the quota system, religion and status thereby encouraging national integration.

Another implication of finding is that the administrators must ensure that the right work force are recruited as teachers at all levels of educational system and that they are adequately taken care of since the mechanism for realising national integration, security and conflict resolution can only be found in a solid and viable educational system where the teacher is an indisputable factor, anything less than this leaves the nation with severe consequences of social instability.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations were made:

- The government should strive to eradicate illiteracy and to this end government shall as when practicable provide free compulsory and universal education at all levels of education and ensure that a good percentage of the annual budgetary allocation is placed on the frontline of education.
- Workshops should be organised for the teachers and the administrators on the globalisation of the world economy so they can in turn impart the students in the right way to package their life in a constructive manner.
- The educational administrator and teachers should ensure that the curriculum is structured in a way that it inculcates the right value, morals, and attitudes into the students who are the future of the country.
Conclusion

The study revealed that peace, national security and integration are the right ingredients that keep the nation as one entity and the study showed that the root that fosters these variables lies in quality education. The study concludes that quality education which places premium on development and inculcation of right attitudes, values, feelings and national consciousness to the parties involved should be focused on and that when our youths are properly informed, qualitatively educated, they cannot pose a security threat to national existence.

References.


