

## **Development of Core Values for National Integration in Nigeria.**

<sup>1</sup>D.A. Falade (Ph.D), <sup>2</sup>M. Falade

<sup>1</sup>Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo

<sup>2</sup>St. Monicas Grammar School, Ondo.

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper examined the development of core values that can promote national integration and unity in Nigeria. The paper posited that one of the major factors that deter national integration and unity in Nigeria is the inability of many Nigerian citizens to demonstrate core national values of patriotism, tolerance, cooperation, honesty and obedience. It is discovered in the paper that presently, value for wealth, materialism and ethnic loyalty are prominent among a number of Nigerians while civic values that can promote unity are relegated to the background. The paper revealed that value orientation is not a new development in Nigeria. Nigerian governments at various times have adopted both formal and informal means of inculcating national values in the citizens. However, these efforts had yielded little or no result because of some problems. The paper emphasized that the inculcation of core values in the citizens will, to a large extent, guarantee national integration, peace and unity in the nation. Some of the approaches that could be adopted to develop core national values in the Nigerian citizens are pointed out in the paper.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria as a geo-political entity with diverse ethnic and religious groups is faced with terrorism, ethnic and religious crises that threaten the survival of the nation. In the word of Ekanola (2006) “Nigeria is bedeviled by myriad problems which, despite its oil riches, inhibit its development and even threaten its continued existence as a sovereign state”. Historical analyses indicate that people of diverse historical and cultural backgrounds migrated and settled in different parts of the territories now referred to as Nigeria. Again, the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 notwithstanding, the colonial administrators adopted the system of indirect rule, which hindered inter and intra-communal unity.

Immediately after independence in 1960, Nigeria witnessed ethnic based agitations and party politics. This strengthened the ethnic bias and intolerance that existed among people from different parts of the nation. Ifeanaccho and Nwagwu, (2009) pointed out that Nigerians hate each other, they fear each other, they do not know each other because they can not communicate with each other. They are separated strategically by a power elite that arrogates powers to itself and retains such power by upholding the principle of divide and conquer. In Nigeria, the practice of ethnic politics has sustained the belief that each of the over 250 ethnic groups must struggle for its own share of the national resources (Oyewale, 2010). Today, the emergence and growth of ethnic militias as well as the Boko Haram insurgency constitute great threat to the stability and unity of the nation. According to Ekanola (2006):

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 affiliations for identity, loyalty and security. 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 and religious wars....P. 280.

This socio-political background and the little emphasis placed on core-national-values in Nigeria are partly responsible for the unpatriotic, disunity, inter and intra-ethnic violence that characterize the nation. The predominant value system of wealth and material acquisition, ethnic and tribal loyalty are fundamental obstacles to national integration and survival of Nigeria as a nation. This is the reason why Ugwuegbu (2004) argued that a community populated with people without appropriate positive value will not survive. Bello-Imam and Obadan (2004) observed that instead of producing thinking and objective human beings, the educational system produced many fearful and uncritical citizens who were also selfish and indifference to public affairs.

Nigeria cannot attain national integration that could foster expected development and national transformations except the citizens acquire and demonstrate required values and traits. According to Isola (2010)

value development is the major factor in national development. Any nation not grounded in non-perishable values can not make progress. Falade and Orungbemi (2011) emphasized that African nations need urgent innovative value orientation programme that can facilitate the development of core values as well as civic and political ideals in the citizens. The Nigerian dreams of national integration, peace and development can only come to reality with the internalization of the core values enshrined in the National Anthem and Pledge which reflect the national value of honesty, obedience, loyalty, cooperation and patriotism (Ajere and Oyinloye, 2011). It is against this background that this paper examines the development of core-values as means of promoting national integration in Nigeria.

### **National Integration: The Nigeria Experience.**

National integration is 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 (Sanda, 1999). The purpose of national integration is to build a united and strong nation. Nigeria is made up of diverse communities each of which has its own peculiar cultural background and value system. National integration and unity require coordinated and concerted efforts towards unified value system that can promote oneness.

Nigeria as a heterogeneous society with more than 250 ethnic groups is confronted with historical problems that have impeded national integration and unity. National integration is one of the un-accomplished desires in Nigeria. Ifeaccho and Nwagwu, (2009) observed that Nigeria's efforts at achieving national integration have remained largely unrealized. The entire social matrix in Nigeria is characterized by inter community and intra-community; inter ethnic and intra-ethnic; inter-religious and intra-religious strife. Some of these conflicts are as old as the history of Nigeria as a nation.

The problem of lack of unity and national integration in Nigeria emanated from the artificial creation of Nigeria as a single geo-political entity. Hansen in Ekanola (2006) argued that what the creation of Nigeria as a single political entity did was to bring together people of different nationalities. Unfortunately, the peoples making up the country were not effectively integrated towards the end of evolving a true sense of national identity and commitment to the survival and development of a nation. The reason for the non-integration of the people from the diverse socio-political backgrounds is not far-fetched. The colonialists were less interested in developing a united Nigeria nation. Rather, they were much more interested in the resources available in the colony. Hence, the policy of divide and rule was adopted to enable them to achieve their goals.

During the colonial era, there was much tension among ethnic groups due to uneven development. By the time Nigeria got her independence in 1960, its artificial origin, coupled with other factors had bequeathed it a number of fundamental problems, of which is the challenge of integrating, into a cohesive socio-political whole, the various entities that were lumped together by the colonialists (Olukoju, 1997).

Again, the political elites that took over from the colonial administrators did not help matter as they were desperate for political power. They resulted into ethnic politics as the easy way for gaining political power. The contradictions and conflicts fuelled by this problem culminated in the Nigerian civil war, several military coups, fragile attempts at democratization, religious, ethnic and tribal crises and the rise of ethnic militias as well as terrorist groups (Ifeaccho and Nwagwu, 2009). In an interview Gen. Akinrinmade forewarned that any multi-ethnic society, such as Nigeria, that erected its political edifice on arrangement that is devoid of equity will not survive. (Tell Magazine, 2012).

Socio-economic and political developments in Nigeria have been hindered by disunity and its associated problems. Hence, the Nigerian government has made some policies and programmes aimed at promoting national integration and unity. Some of these policies/programmes are: Federal character, NYSC, unity secondary schools, National Sports, Festival, National symbols, etc. However, the Nigeria socio-political experience, since independence indicates that the much needed unity has not been achieved in Nigeria. Many Nigerians have loyalty to their ethnic and social groups than they have for the nation.

### **Core Values for National Integration and Unity.**

Values are standards or principles by which human beings are influenced in their choice among alternative courses of action. Values are cherished and acceptable standards of behaviour, they are the highest ethical parameters and criteria through which individuals, groups and societies order their goals, determine their choice and judge their conducts (Ihedoro, 2006). According to Ugwuegbu (2004), values are the goals people work for. They are those elements in a person's behaviour that show how a person has decided to use his time, energy or life. Values determine where people put most of their energy, what they work for and the way they go about that which they do.

Core values are the selected standards of behaviour that are fundamental to developing a stable and progressive nation. Core values are the acceptable, right and cherished pattern of behaviour that are capable of enhancing national integration and unity. According to Ajere and Oyinloye (2011):

In every society across the globe, core-values are attached prime priority as social ingredients for social transformation, peace, unity, stability, growth and development. These values are in most cases enshrined in the national anthem and pledges of various countries of the world for citizens to internalize for inner transformation. In Nigeria for instance, values such as faithfulness, loyalty, honesty and patriotism are topical in her classical national documents for the citizens to absorb into their body system. P. 181

Many nations of the world have stated core values that are meant for socio-political stability and for the survival of the nation. In United States of America, for instance, the core values are honesty, dignity and worth of every one, moral conscience, patriotism and equality. In Saudi-Arabia, the core values include morality, commitment to the service of Allah, truthfulness and honesty. Patriotism is the core national value in Rome. This is why the nationals claim that “it is sweet and fitting to die for ones country” (Ajere and Oyinloye, 2011). Some of the core values enshrined in the Nigerian national pledge and anthem are discussed below

## **II. PATRIOTISM**

Mclean and Mcmillan (2009) described patriotism as love of one’s country or zeal in the defence of the interest of one’s country. Patriotism therefore means loving and being loyal to our country. Patriotism further means showing more regard and loyalty to our nation rather than our ethnic groups, states, local government areas and towns. Akinjide (2006) described patriotism as the extent to which citizens trust and support their government and the extent to which the government trust and support its citizens. Aspects of patriotism include: absence of bribery and corruption, love of ones country, obeying laws, paying taxes, loyalty and voting at elections (Center for Communication Development, 2003). Patriotism is a vital ingredient of socio-economic and political stability. When the citizens (the leader and the led) are patriotic, it fosters national integration and assists in advancing the course of national development. It is only when we are patriotic that our country can survive, grow, carry out her normal duties and resist attack from other nations (CESAC, 1985). One of the problems that impede national integration and unity in Nigeria is ethnicity. The recent emergence of ethnic militia groups such as the Egbesu Boys(EB), among the Ijaws, the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) among the Yorubas, the Arewa Peoples Congress (APC) in the north and other ethnic groupings threaten the existence of Nigerian (Jimoh, 1997; Salami, 2002). The inculcation of the value of patriotism in the Nigerian citizens has therefore become an urgent task. There is the need to develop in the citizens such value that will enable them to put the interest of Nigeria first before those of the ethnic groups.

## **III. OBEDIENCE**

Obedience means to comply with or abide by rules, regulations and laws of the land without being reminded or forced to do so. The value of obedience is essential for civic responsibility. It produces responsible, effective and law-abiding citizens. This promotes unity, peaceful co-existence, progress and human dignity in the nation. Today, the rank and file of the Nigerian citizens does not demonstrate the value and trait of obedience. Ugwuegbu (2004) investigated the values of middle class Nigerians and discovered that out of the seventeen values examined, the value that is least demonstrated by Nigerians is ‘law abiding’ This is supported by the World Bank report that Nigeria scored less than five percent in a scale that determined the extent to which the citizens respect and abide by the rule of law (Akinjide, 2006).

Our cities are in chaos each day because of flagrant disregard for laws. For example, disobedience to traffic rules and regulations, urban or regional planning regulations, environmental sanitary regulations, prohibition of street trading and related activities regulations (Iyamu and Otote 2003). In the Nigerian educational institutions, many pupils and students are not obedient to school and examination regulations. This has compounded the problem of moral decadence and cases of youth restiveness in the nation.

## **IV. TOLERANCE**

This is the quality, which makes us allow people to express their views or do things in their own ways though we may not agree with them. It is an attitude of live-and- let-live. For example, your neighbour may belong to a particular religion, which is different from your own. You may not like some of the practices of his/her religion. As a tolerant person, you should learn to put up with some of them (Center for Community Development, 2003). The Nigerian motto: **Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress** can only be attained when the citizens tolerate one another.

Many Nigerians do not demonstrate the value of tolerant. A lot of people are not tolerating in political matters. After most elections in Nigeria, winners and losers see themselves as enemies. This shows that there is problem of intolerance. In the houses of legislature, many politicians are very intolerant with people who oppose their views. They cause chaos thereby making it difficult for decision to be taken. Also, many religious leaders and groups in Nigeria cannot tolerate the practices of other religious groups. Such intolerance often breeds hatred, tension and open confrontation (CESAC 1985; Center for Community Development, 2003). CESAC (1985) explained that intolerance hinder cooperation among politicians. Instead of working together as a team for the good of the country, they even oppress or victimize their opponents by using thugs to beat them up. In Nigeria, intolerance is one of the major causes of ethnic, social and political crises.

## V. MORALITY

This is the belief or idea about what is right or wrong and about how people should behave. Morality is used to describe a person's conduct or way of life as good or bad. Thus, immorality is conceived as any conduct, which violates human ethics. To be morally good is to have consideration for national welfare and the welfare of others. This will make us to do those things that are right and acceptable in the society. A moral person demonstrates citizenship traits by living in accordance to the values of the society. The lives of many Nigerian youths are ridden with such vices as stealing, drunkenness, rape, drug abuse, examination malpractice, vandalism, sexual harassment, robbery, etc (Iyamu and Otote, 2003). To build a civil and united society, the citizens must be morally good.

## VI. HONESTY

This is the act of being truthful. An honest person tells the truth, he loves justice and fair play. One of the major causes of undemocratic practices and low level of civic responsibility in Nigeria today is dishonesty among the citizens. Iyamu and Otote (2003) expressed that dishonesty of Nigerian citizens has been largely responsible for the unwillingness of foreign investors to favour Nigeria for business activities. Dishonesty is displayed in various ways, such as bribery and corruption, sale of adulterated drugs and foods, illegal minting and circulation of currencies, sale of sub-standard spare parts, altering of expiry dates of drug, labeling of low quality goods as original ones and examination malpractice.

### Value Orientation and its Problems in Nigeria

Value orientation is not a recent development in Nigeria. Before westernization, the existing traditional education in Nigeria was concerned with training the children for social responsibility and political participation. The main focus of socialization in the African traditional society is character training. All the agents and processes of socialization aimed at producing individuals who are truthful, hospitable, honest, respectful, skilled, obedient and patriotic. According to Falade (2010):

...among the Yoruba, there are many indigenous values that promote social integration and enhance the building of the civil society... To the Yoruba, man's character-*iwa*, is of supreme importance and it is this which God-*Olodumare* judges... The Yoruba adopt multidimensional approaches to inculcate good character and traits into the young ones. Some of these approaches are: ridicule, discipline, instruction, clubs, proverbs, folklores, praises and correction. P.1.

In the modern Nigerian society, both formal and informal approaches are adopted to inculcate societal values in the citizens. The formal approach involves the use of school subjects to educate learners on civic matters. The Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE) provided for citizenship training and the inculcation of civic values at the different levels of the school system. Section 2 (f) of the NPE stated that the purpose of pre-primary education should be to develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit. Section 3 (c) stated that the goal of primary education is to give citizenship education a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society ( NPE, 2004).

To achieve these goals, value-related subjects like social studies, religious education, citizenship and civic education have been incorporated into the school curriculum. Particularly, civic education has been recently integrated into the 9-year Basic Education programme in Nigeria. Some of the aims of civic education as pointed out by Ajibade (2011) are: to enable the learners to acquire the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that would make them to become responsible citizens; to inculcate in the child the spirit of self-discipline, hardworking, cooperation and respect for authority; to create adequate and functional political literates among Nigerians.

In addition, different Nigerian political leaders have introduced some informal approaches as means of value re-orientation in the country. Some of these approaches are: Jaji declaration by Major General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1977; National Ethical Re-orientation by the Alhaji Shehu Sagari administration in 1982; War Against Indiscipline (WAI) lunched by the Buhari/Idiagbon government in 1984; Directorate of Social Mobilization, Self Reliance, Economic Recovery and Social Justice (MAMSER) introduced by the Babangida Administration; National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) introduced by Olusegun Obasanjo's administration in 2004.

The efforts of the government towards value orientation and national integration have not yielded much result in Nigeria. Ajere and Oyinloye (2011) pointed out that Nigeria is heading for a state of anomie considering all forms of dysfunctions in behaviour patterns among youths and adults. There are certain fundamental reasons why some of the value orientation programmes of the Nigerian government have partially or totally failed.

The wrong value system in the Nigerian society partly account for the failure of value orientation programme in the nation. Many Nigerians pursue wealth and materialism without giving due attention to core-national values. Soyinka (2010) lamented that a situation where Nigerians celebrate individuals rather than the approach to some value orientation programmes in Nigeria has rendered them ineffective. For instance, some of the value orientation programmes are characterized by political propaganda, victimization and coercion. Commenting on the failure of value orientation programmes in Nigeria, Ugwuegbu (2004) said that value orientation programmes in Nigeria tend to emphasis more of the negative than positive values. For instance, some Nigeria political leaders focused their attention on the negative values of corruption, intolerance and laziness without emphasizing positive values like honesty, hardworking, cooperation and patriotism which could empower the citizens to demonstrate the expected civic traits.

Also, the state and structure of the contemporary Nigerian family is worrisome. The family has abandoned its fundamental role of socialization and child-training in pursuit of social, political and economic gains. Conflict, separation and divorce characterize some of the present day Nigerian families. This has negative impact on the character and personality of the young ones. This is because the very first place of learning is the home. A child is a product of his immediate environment, which is the home (Adebowale, 2007). Consequently, the cherished values of love, respect, hardworking, patience and cooperation that the Nigerian child is expected to acquire are grossly missing.

Moreover, the use of school curriculum as means of value orientation and civic training is not without its own problems. In Nigeria, the school system and the society places undue emphasis on intellectual ability and certificate at the expense of skills and values. Internal and external examinations are cognitive based. Even when civic based school subjects are introduced into the school programme, they are either poorly taught or not well implemented. Up till now, the teaching of social studies is not implemented at the Senior Secondary School level in the country. Although civic education has been integrated into the Basic Education programme, yet there is no teacher education programme on civic education to equip the teachers with the skills of teaching value-related concepts. Hence, after many years of introducing some of the school subjects, their goals are not achieved.

Bad leadership, social and economic problems are other factors that hinder effective acquisition and demonstration of societal values in Nigeria. Some Nigerian leaders do not manifest appropriate character that could encourage the followers to emulate them. Cases of corrupt practices, ethnic and religious bias, intolerance and bribery even among so called "integrity group" are evident among Nigerian leaders. The problems of terrorism, armed robbery and ethnic militias that have become security threat to the nation today emanated from unemployment, poverty and marginalization. This is the reason why Gen. Akinrinade declared that if some people feel cheated in a group, the house cannot stand. The fragile unity in this 'creaking' federation is the kind that can never be sustained (Tell Magazine, 2012).

### **Inculcating Core Values in the Nigerian Citizens**

The lack of national consciousness, patriotic orientation and manifestation of uncivilized acts had painfully led to social disorder and disorientation in the Nigerian society (Onipe, 2011). Therefore, the need for appropriate means of developing core values in the Nigerian citizens can not be over-emphasized. This is the major thing that can guarantee national integration, peace and unity in the country. Ajere and Oyinloye (2011) examined the perception of youths on the interiorization of core societal values in Nigeria. Their findings revealed that 80% of the youths resolved that Nigeria's dream of building a cohesive, stable and united nation can not be achieved except adequate incentives are put in place to ensure positive social transformation of the citizens.

Agbo (2010) pointed out that attitudinal change in both public and private lives are achievable through value orientation. This assertion is corroborated by Rock (2010) who reported that negative attitudes could be changed to positive irrespective of the period of assimilation and internalization. Ajere and Oyinloye (2011) also argued that recent research on neuroscience showed that the human brain is highly plastic. Hence, neural

connections can be formed, new behaviours can be learned, and even the most entrenched behaviours can be modified at any age. Some of the means that could be used to develop core values in the Nigerian citizens are discussed below.

In the first place, the socialization role of the Nigerian family should be re-addressed. This could be done by providing public awareness through seminars and workshops for married couples. Family life education can also be integrated into all formal and semi-formal educational programmes in Nigeria. Such family life education programme should address the effects of family instability on the socialization of the young ones. Also, the various means and strategies by which the family could effectively inculcate core-values in its members should be analyzed through the programme. Adebowale (2007) further recommended that the local government, at the grass root, could have counseling unit for would be couples and homes experiencing problems.

Also, there is the need to reform the education system in Nigeria in such a way that values education becomes the main purpose of formal and informal education. Character training should be given better priority in our school curriculum. The Nigerian government should allocate required money for the development of human and material resources that are needed for character education. Martin Luther, cited in Akinjide (2006) expressed that the prosperity of a country depends not on the abundance of its revenue, nor on the strength of its fortification, but it consists in the number of its cultivated citizens, in its men of education and character. In the United States of America, for instance, it was discovered that the cultivation of citizenship and the creation of a civil society were great tasks. Consequently, in 1989, the United States of America Governors made a series of national school reform goals known as *Goal 2000*. Education for the development of national core values has been the central purpose of formal education in America and to some extent that education has yielded fruits in the country (Clark, 1999).

Moreover, other agents of socialization should be involved in value orientation programmes. Divergent approaches should be adopted to inculcate national ideals into the Nigerian citizens. In a focus group conducted by Ajere and Oyinloye (2011) the participating youths unanimously agreed that re-orientation programmes on core societal values through the mass media, religious houses and other allied orientation agencies be established by the government. For instance, skill acquisition programme on core national values can be designed for religious leaders. Apart from the fact that such programme will bring leaders from various religious groups together, it will also expose them to core values that can promote unity. It will, at the same time, acquaint them with relevant information that would assist them to inculcate core national values in their followers.

Another approach to value orientation in Nigeria is establishment of Participatory Core Value Forum (PCVF) for every category of the Nigerian citizen. The PCVF can have a national headquarter with branches in all states, local government areas, schools and other institutions. Through the PCVF, the Nigerian citizens, at different organizational levels can analyze the value problems in their localities; initiate means by which such value problems can be solved; get the PCVF members involved in demonstrating group roles, values and skills that can promote unity. Falade and Orungbemi (2011) emphasized that such group activities will assist members to acquire values and skills that are required for followers and leaders in a democratic setting.

Again, there must be strong conviction, vision and unrelenting mission of “a united Nigeria” in the mind of every Nigerian. Nigerian leaders, in particular, should pursue national integration with all available resources and energy. Wanogho (2011) pointed out that America is a country that share similar background of multi-ethnicity with Nigeria. In spite the differences in America, Martin Luther King, Jr. was able to bring his dreams of integration and unity to fruition through consistent efforts, lectures, seminars, workshops, rallies and all other effective means of enlightenment campaign. He consciously and deliberately deemphasized racism, ethnicity, religion and cultural affiliations. This accounts for the peace and unity prevailing in America today.

Lastly, socio-economic and political restructuring is pivotal to any successful mission of value orientation programme in Nigeria. There must be credible leadership and good governance. There must also be efficient law enforcement agents and judicial system. The problem of poverty and unemployment must be solved because an hungry man is an angry man.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

The problem of lack of unity and integration in Nigeria emanated from the artificial creation of the country as a single geo-political entity. One of the major shortcomings of the colonialists is their failure to effectively integrate and orientate the people of Nigeria towards the sense of national identity and commitment to the development of a united nation.

Ethnic politics, religious intolerance, terrorist activities, tribal conflicts and ethnic militias have, in the recent time, threatened the survival and continuity of Nigeria as a nation. The ingredients of building a strong and united nation are clearly missing in the lives of some Nigerians. Among the rank and file of the Nigerian

citizens, there are demonstration of negative values like intolerance, dishonesty, disobedience and other unpatriotic tendencies.

This paper emphasized that if Nigeria is going to continue as a single nation, the development of core values in the Nigerian citizens is an urgent task. The Nigerian leaders and followers must acquire the values that would enable them to put the interest of the nation first before those of self, social, religious, political and ethnic groupings.

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