

Educational Administrators' Roles in Managing Secondary Education for National Cohesion and Global Competitiveness

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Abstract

Promoting national unity and the fitness of a country for global competitiveness is one of the cardinal responsibilities of the education sector. This is why the government of any developing or even developed country should not undermine the importance of education in nation building. It is in the light of this that this paper discussed the roles of school administrators in instilling the sense of national cohesion in school children who are the future human capitals that will position the country for global competitiveness. National cohesion in this paper is defined as the act of making individuals living in the same country have a sense and feeling of oneness, unity and perceiving themselves as a community of people. Global competitiveness is also defined as the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country in comparison with other countries. This to a large extent determines or promotes the citizen' well-being and comfort. Education and its proper administration, especially at the primary and secondary school levels is therefore, seen as a vital tool to accomplish national cohesion and global competitiveness. The paper equally enumerated some factors that promote national cohesion and global competitiveness as well as problems of national cohesion. Some suggestions were also offered as how to solve them. It is therefore, the position of this paper that school administrators must sit-up to their responsibility of grooming pupils and students who must see themselves as one indivisible and indissoluble people, if the country will achieve national cohesion and be fit for global competitiveness.

Keywords: National Cohesion, Global Competitiveness, School Administrators, National Unity.

INTRODUCTION

The strength of any country lies on the spirit of oneness and conviction that the country belongs to all and not to one individual, section, tribe or a particular ethnic group. Citizens are instilled with the understanding that they have no other country other than their country. They are made to imbibe the attitude of love for fellow countrymen. This brings about national cohesion, which has to do with making all citizens in the country to have sense and feeling that they belong to the country and are the same communities of people. Supporting this Abubakar (2017) opine that one of the ways of achieving national unity is when there is equity and fairness in the sharing of national resources and opportunities. Education is a vital tool and quickest way of instilling this understanding of oneness and the essence of national cohesion. Education is a means of acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge which help the individual to be functional and to survive in this competitive technological globe. It equips the individual with the tools and ability to understand his environment and society. This is why Butch (2006) defined education as a major force in economic, intellectual, social and cultural empowerment. Njeng'ere (2014) also

opines that globally, a major purpose of education has been to achieve national cohesion and integration. It is therefore only a country that has well educated citizens that live in unity and is able to compete effectively with other countries of the world.

The school as an important institution in any country has a vital role to play in building national cohesion. This is because apart from the home, the school is the first place where young minds are gathered to acquire needed learning experiences that build them up into functional and useful citizens. This implies that the school has the great opportunity of instilling national cohesive spirit in the young ones very early in life. The administration and management of schools are entrusted into the care and keeping of trained educational administrators and teachers and by extension to educational managers who make plans, policies and programmes of education. Implicitly, they must be people of sound minds, knowledgeable, patriotic, non-discriminatory, and a set of individuals who are endowed with sense of national consciousness and national unity. It is expected that they should not be religious fanatics, sectional, exhibit tribal sentiments and hatred. When school administrators, managers and teachers groom school children in having team spirit, love and regards for one another, being patriotic and having sense of national unity, they would have achieved national cohesion.

It is on these bases that this paper will discuss the educational administrators' responsibilities in managing secondary education for national cohesion and global competitiveness via the following sub-headings:

- The concept of national cohesion and global competitiveness;
- The benefits of national cohesion and global competitiveness;
- School administrators' roles in managing secondary schools for national cohesion and global competitiveness.
- Factors that promote national unity and global competitiveness;
- Problems of national cohesion and global competitiveness;
- Possible solutions to these problems; and
- Conclusions

The Concept of National Cohesion and Global Competitiveness

National cohesion is a process of making all citizens of a country have a feeling that they are members of the same country, who are engaged in common course of nation building and are faced by common challenges. Abubakar (2017) defined national cohesion as ‘‘ a sense of unity and oneness by citizens of a country to the extent that, despite their diversity, they see themselves as forming a nation’’. It is this sense of oneness according to him that brings about solidarity and encourages them to invest economically, socially, politically and emotionally towards the development of their nation-country. Nevertheless, national cohesion does not rule out disagreements among citizens, rather, it demands that disagreements among citizens should be resolved within the ambit of country's laws, rules and regulations as to preserve that sense of solidarity and oneness.

Etzioni (2002) cited in Xian (2017) defined national cohesion or national unity as solidarity within citizens of a nation, with minimum sectorial practices and close adherence to law and order. National unity however does not imply homogeneity. It rather advocates a ‘‘community of communities’’ which respects diversity and share values, experiences and

geographical relativity. To maintain national unity citizens must have to tolerate one another which is an incremental prerequisite to societal peace.

National cohesion is not all about peace-keeping and conflict management. It has to do with the fundamental belief that citizens can only achieve their full potentials when they live and work together as a people. This is achievable through ensuring that the differences, competing interests are resolved. National cohesion manifests fully when almost every citizen of a country has equal opportunities to national resources and thus are equally motivated to participate in the nation building and self-development. National cohesion demands that national values and good governance be upheld. National values have to do with the belief, conviction and understanding that citizens' behaviours are guided by national interest while principles of good governance demands that the nation or government performs her functions as to promote or improve the well-being of the citizens.

Supporting this view, Abubakar (2017) opines that good governance in a democratic setting, would mean that the government effectively and efficiently delivers on its laid down constitutional duties and promises to the electorate in a fair and equitable manner. This implies that the government of the day must be accountable, transparent and recognize the people's rights and privileges. Good governance also connotes improving peoples' well-being and enhancing their freedom. Still in view of Abubakar (2017, p. 2), good governance in contemporary Nigeria involves addressing the country economic stagnation and crisis, including transitioning the economy to a post-oil/commodities, trajectory, ensuring security, fighting corruption and restructuring the polity, including the structure of the Federation and government institutions".

Obviously, maintaining national cohesion is a task not only for the government of the day, rather it demands that everyone in a place of authority, heads of institutions and organizations and particularly administrators and managers of schools who have the responsibilities of educating the young must instill the sense of national cohesion into pupils and students at all levels if a country like Nigeria must produce human capital that make her to be fit for global competitiveness.

The concept 'global' according to Ogomaka (2016) implies "objects", issues or experiences that concern the entire globe, the world we live in. Technology has made the world a global village. As such, the information about the economic productivity of each country of the world is no longer a secret. This gives room to competition and the struggle between nations to showcase their levels of supremacy and competences in terms of development and sustainability of their citizens. This is why The World Economic Forum in 1979 defined economic or global competitiveness as "the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country" (<https://www.tutorialcurrentandmedium-termlevelsofeconomicprosperity>).

This also implies that what makes a country competitive is the level to which it develops ability, attitudes, form behaviours of positive values and promotes the citizens' well-being and comfort. This may attest to why countries like America, Britain and other world powers have great patronage from third world countries. In other words, people from third world countries prefer to live in countries like United States, Britain, Germany and other developed European countries. In a sense it can be claimed that third world countries are not competing favourably with the western world since western countries seem to offer better comfort and well-being to their citizens. So, global competitiveness entails the ability of countries of the world to showcase their various institutions' and organizations' levels of productivity in order to attract international attention and patronage.

Global competition is also seen as the services or products provided by competing companies that serve international customers. This allows companies to buy and sell their services internationally, which gives opportunities for increased profits. This implies that educational services can be rendered across the borders depending on the worth and level of acceptance. Today we have American University in Nigeria as a way of showing that interested Nigerians may not stress themselves travelling to the US to attend such a university. This is a form of global competitiveness in education.

The Benefits of National Cohesion and Global Competitiveness

The fact that individuals live together within a geographical location demands that they must stay harmoniously. This implies that there must be national cohesion. Nigeria government did not lose sight of this need for oneness and as such stated in FRN (2014, p. 1) that the overall national philosophy of the nation includes:

- To live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice; and
- To promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding.

Based on this, one of the beliefs of Nigeria's philosophy of education is that "education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria" (FRN, 2014, p. 1). The foremost benefit of national cohesion therefore is the ability and potentials for ensuring that no ethnic group has either, political, cultural and economic dominance over the others within a given country. It is only through the educational institutions that such sense of oneness is instilled into the individual. National cohesion brings about the development of a nation. The government is able to understand people's needs and choices. It brings about sense of national consciousness and national identity which is a shared understanding that a group of people shares a common ethnic/linguistic/cultural background. In fact, national consciousness is the first step towards the creation of a nation (Odu-onikosi, 2016).

According to Niraula (2017), national cohesion builds national integrity. It helps the country to promote and uplift all race, sex, class and religion proportionally. He is equally of the view that national cohesion helps to fulfill the rights and judicial demand of people as well as make legal provisions for distribution of resources and wealth of a country equally.

National cohesion or unity brings about political and economic stability that attracts foreign investors who contribute to the industrialization of the country, and consequently economic growth, development and foreign exchange. It prevents national chaos, ethnic and intertribal wars and civil disturbances. It brings about national peace and contributes to nation-building. National cohesion or unity keeps a nation at advantage for global competitiveness. The ability of a country to compete favourably with other countries of the world brings about productivity, which has been seen as the driving force behind growth and income levels of individuals. In other words, the income levels of people are directly linked to their welfare.

As such the increase in competitiveness implies increase in prosperity and productivity. The education industry is therefore saddled with the responsibilities of ensuring that adequate human capital are produced to enable the nation face her international challenges and competitions. Supporting this view is the World Economic Forum Report on Global Competitiveness of 2014-2015 which state that health and primary education and higher education

and training are the fourth and fifth Pillars of global competitiveness. This implies that lack of basic education can become a constraint to national development and that ‘‘today’s globalizing economy needs countries to nurture pools of well-educated workers who are able to perform complex tasks and adapt rapidly to their changing environment and the evolving needs of the production system. Still supporting this view Dike (2007) stated that the quality and level of educational attainment of the people determines the quality of its leaders, the pace of the economic development and the nation’s global competitiveness. Dike is also of the view that one way to determine the seriousness of a society is to appraise its educational system and the quality of individuals appointed or elected to run the affairs of the nation.

School Administrators’ Roles in the Management of National Cohesion and Global Competitiveness

School heads have complex roles to play in ensuring that the school functions as an agent of national cohesion and global competitiveness. This implies that educational activities should be well planned, administered, coordinated and structured in line with national goals and aspirations. Educational administrators should ensure that the needed quality of personnel are employed and the required quality and quantity of material and financial resources are invested so as to enable the education industry meet the international standard as well as global competitiveness. Supporting this view Dike (2006) opined that the state of education in any society is a combination of many factors such as the resources invested and the quality of personnel assigned to manage the system. It is based on this mindset that he sees education in terms of its relevance to the individual and its’ overall impact on Nigeria’s global competitiveness. The traditional Nigerian society like some other African countries was known for its indigenous system of education. But with the coming of the Christian missionaries, western education was introduced in the mid nineteen century.

The standard of this western education was very high as it was managed by our British colonial masters, even after they left in the 1960s and later part of 1970s. However, the later part of 1980s till now witnessed a dwindling and neglected state of western education. The result of this is what many people describe as the fallen standard of education According to some people, this is portrayed in the fact that graduates of many levels of education have ceased to display the expected level of knowledge and skills acquired in their various fields of endeavour. But can this be actually described as a fallen standard of education? Has one plus one ceased to be two? If this is not the case, it is then not proper to claim that there is a fallen standard of education. Rather, It can best be described as a fallen interest and commitment of the individuals who acquire the western formal education as well as those who sponsor and administer it. This has lunched formal education in Nigeria into a state of chaos. The resultant effect is the situation whereby the standard of education in Nigeria cannot meet the global standard and competitiveness. This has as well affected every facet of the country; economy and governance, science and technology, individual participation and responsibility, etc.

This calls for the attention of school administrators and educational managers to go back to the drawing board. Education in Nigeria must be given a priority attention by all and sundry, if it must be a tool for national cohesion and the country be fit for global competitiveness. Educational managers must make educational policies and goals that are in line with the national goals and aspiration and at the same ensure that these programmes and policies are properly implemented. At the primary and secondary schools’ levels, school administrators and teachers

should endeavour to instill a sense of national cohesion and global competitiveness into the school children through their curriculum of studies.

There should be serious efforts geared towards bringing back the consciousness and interest on education as it were in the 1960s and 70s. Students must be made to cultivate the culture of reading and honest efforts in passing their internal and external examinations. Educational administrators both in public and private schools must stop the practice of mass promotion which to a very large extent has dragged our education to the mud. A system where students do not fail examinations no matter how poor they are academically is enough to discourage diligence and honest effort to read and pass exams.

To ensure national cohesion, school administrators must ensure that school children are encouraged to see themselves as one indivisible and indissoluble people as contained in the national policy of education. Ethnic or tribal and religious sentiments must be discouraged. Nigeria children and their parents should have equal freedom and rights to live and school in any part of the country unmolested. School administrators and teachers must treat every school child fairly irrespective of their states of origin. The menace of quota system in offering admissions to Federal Government schools should be abolished. This will make the Nigeria school children to have sense of belonging and feel not marginalized. Educational administrators must instill into their students a sense of nation building, patriotism, creativity, ingenuity, entrepreneurship and love of their father land. Students must be educated to be functional and employable members of the society. Students should be encouraged to take to educational programmes that will make them contribute meaningfully to the economic, political and social development of the country.

To achieve national cohesion and national consciousness, educational administrators and teachers must endeavour to create jingles, songs, posters, chats, paintings and drawings to portray the country as a nation that must be loved and cherished by her citizens. Every negative image of the country must be done away with. The children must be taught to hold their country as well as other citizens to high esteem. Every corrupt and negative conducts must be discouraged. School children must be nurtured into having passion for the growth and development of their country.

To achieve global competitiveness, educational administrators and teachers must expose their students to educational information on the internet. Students must be made to follow the technological trend of things in other countries of the world. They should equally be encouraged to embark on field trips, international excursions, workshops, symposia, seminars and many other educational activities that would make them have practical understanding of what they are taught in the classrooms. They must be encouraged to exhibit and showcase their natural ingenuity and creativity. Their creative arts and productions should be exhibited to the general public to be bought, as this would to a large extent encourage them in doing more. The education system must be made attractive for foreign patronage or trans-border education.

School administrators should promote cultural integration. The major Nigerian languages should be taught in schools as to avail students the opportunities of knowing other languages other than theirs. Through language acquisitions, students will imbibe other cultural practices that will make them see themselves as one people. This is very necessary for national cohesion and global competitiveness.

Factors that Promote National Cohesion and Global Competitiveness

A country like Nigeria that is bewitched with so many ethnic, religious, political, economic and social problems, cannot but suffer disunity and disagreement among her citizens. Being this the

case, it behooves the government of the day to ensure that those factors that bring about national disunity are discouraged and imbibe those that can bring about national cohesion and unity. Some of those factors that promote national cohesion and consequently global competitiveness include:

- True practice of federal character – this demands according to section 14(3) of the 1999 constitution cited in Adeosun (2018) that the composition of the Federal government of the federation or of its agencies as well as the conduct of affairs, reflect the federal character of Nigeria as to promote national unity. In other words, there should not be dominance of persons from a few state, ethnic groups, other sectional groups in government or any other of his agencies. This will encourage national loyalty and patriotism. However, in Nigeria today, even though the wordings of the constitution reflects the true intention of the those who drafted it, yet in practice, according to Bassey (2017), the federal character is just a spirit without a body and thus not identifiable in the realm. Indeed the present administration of President Mahamadu Buhari has swept the federal character part of the constitution under the carpet. Almost all heads of important federal government parastatals are given to the northerners even when many of them are unqualified and inexperienced. This has brought the feeling of disunity, marginalization and discrimination. This is why a country like Nigeria should have well educated individuals in governance who would from time to time display broad mindedness instead of being parochial or narrow minded individuals.
- Zoning of leadership positions- this will bring about a sense of satisfaction. It will also curb the menace of political marginalization and promote national unity.
- Equitable distribution of natural resources- being a country that is endowed with abundant natural resources especially crude oil and natural gas, the government of Nigeria should ensure that the proceeds of these natural resources are equitably shared to every section of the country.
- Fixing of the Nigeria's fallen standard of education- according to Odu-Onikosi (2016), the fact that Nigeria had 10million children out of school in 2013, and also that no Nigerian university made the list of 100 universities in the world in 2015 ranking are very worrisome situation. This therefore demands that the government must realize the urgency of finding workable means of fixing the nations' failing education standard in order to reposition the country for global competitiveness. This implies that for Nigeria education to compete globally, serious fight must be given to the widespread corrupt practices (examination malpractice, cultism, certificate racketing, etc.) that are currently destroying the education sector. It is necessary that regulatory agencies like National commission for colleges of education, National Board for Technical Education, National Universities Commission and other such bodies wake up to their responsibilities. The budgetary allocation to education must be raised to meet the 26 percent UNESCO benchmark.
- Cultural integration- this is another vital factor that aids national cohesion and global competitiveness. As one people Nigerians should see themselves as one entity. Even though they have diverse cultural heritage, yet that should be seen as their strength rather than a cause of disunity. Schools in Nigeria must be mindful of this vital factor.
- Promotion of inter-tribal marriages- the process of inter-marrying can indeed create opportunities for national cohesion. When a northerner marries a southerner, or a

Christian marries a Muslim, they would naturally see themselves as one people. This will to a large extent reduce divisions and discriminations among tribes and ethnic groups.

- Promoting ethnic equality – when all ethnic groups are seen as equal without regarding some as major and some as minor, there will be a sense of equality and fairness. In this case, the Tiv man will feel as important as the Ibo, Yoruba or Hausa, and so on.

Problems of National Cohesion and Global Competiveness

The trend of things in the present day Nigeria leaves no doubt that the country is suffering from serious adhesion when many nations of the world are enjoying national cohesion. Thus, Bassey (2017) lamented that there has never been such a time in the Nigeria's history since after the civil war (1967-1970) has the country's unity been more challenged than now. There have been series of agitations and protests against marginalization, underdevelopment, inequality, unfair treatment of some sectors and regions, ethnic and religious differences etc. These have threatened to weaken the peace and foundation of the country. According to Bassey (2017), fifty-seven years after the war ended and the pronouncement "No victor no vanquish" was made by the Federal Government, Nigeria is still searching for national cohesion.

The problem of national cohesion and the inability of the country to globally compete with some advanced countries of the world are also traceable to the non-implementation of the sections of the national objective of education as contained in the national policy on education. For instance, FRN (2014, p. 2) in section 1, sub-section 6 stated that goals of education to include "...inculcation of national consciousness, values and national unity, and development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society". Yet it is obvious that an average Nigerian child or citizen has no national consciousness in him or her, let alone a sense of national unity, because of the simple fact that our education system has so far not prioritized the need for national consciousness. What is rather promoted in our schools are ethnicity and religious sentiments. This can in no way promote sense of unity and will always keep the country incompetent globally.

Another problem that is making the country unable to compete effectively with other countries of the world is the inability of the education sector to offer functional skills and competencies that will make the nation self-reliant. It is sad to note that Nigeria as a country at this time and age still imports majority of her domestic products, even to the level of toothpick. Students graduate from various fields of study without knowing the practical aspects of the courses they studied. Rarely do we have foreign students in Nigerian universities simply because our schools and universities lack the necessary equipment for the study of various courses especially sciences and technological fields. Nigerian elites and politicians prefer to send their children and wards to universities abroad and syphon the common wealth to their individual foreign bank accounts, instead of building the nations education sector to meet international standard. These unpatriotic practices have kept the nation underdeveloped and perpetually incompetent to compete globally in all aspects of national endeavors. Other problems of national cohesion are ethnicities politics, the culture of greed and selfishness as well as weak respect for the rule of law.

The Way Forward

The act of instilling a sense of national cohesion and consciousness is indeed sacrosanct for the education sector that has been saddled with the responsibility of grooming young minds if the country must be fit for global competitiveness. School administrators, teachers and educational managers must realize the herculean and enormous tasks at hand. They must understand the need for national cohesion and the need to produce human capital that will position Nigeria for global competitiveness. Nigerian citizens from kindergarten age must be groomed to love this country with all their hearts by their teachers, school administrators and managers.

The policy provisions for this must be implemented. Functional and relevant education that addresses the needs of the country must be upheld. The elite and politicians who make unfeasible budgetary allocations to the education must be called to order and properly be educated by ministers and commissioners of education. Ministers, commissioners and permanent secretaries of education should be seasoned educationists who know how best to handle this sector.

The Nigerian polity must make provisions for respect for human dignity, equity, social justice, inclusiveness, equality, human rights. There should not be the practice of marginalization and discrimination.

CONCLUSION

National unity and integration is indeed a vital tool towards national development and advancement. The saying ‘‘united we stand and divided we fall’’ is indeed true. This calls for the reawaking of national consciousness through the education sector and other institutions (families, churches, mosques etc.) in the country. These institutions must rise up to action towards making Nigerian citizens imbibe sense of unity and oneness. The government of the day must ensure that there is equity, justice, fairness, equality and balance in the sharing and distribution of the common wealth of the nation. School heads, educational managers and teachers must ensure that pupils and students inculcate a sense of national unity, positive values and patriotism. The education sector must ensure that they offer the needed and functional type of education that can make the country solve her problems as well as meet the international standard.

It is therefore the position of this paper that school managers who make education policies, school administrators who implement these policies as well as teachers who groom the young Nigerian children must as a matter of necessity ensure that they imbibe a sense of national unity and integration if the country will achieve national cohesion and be fit for global competitiveness.

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