**CULTURAL PLURALAISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY: NIGERIA’S LAG TO GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS**

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**Abstract**

*Nigeria, being a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society has effect on our living together as a nation, allegiance to the nation, fairness on national decisions, as well as national identity. In Nigeria, there is a general alienation to Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Ijaw, Tiv, Urhobo e.t.c without national allegiance among the citizen and this in no small measure affect our judgement, behaviour to fellow citizen, national decision making and national development. Election and appointment of government officials and allocation of national resources always considers generality above necessity, due to fear of ethnic domination, lopsided growth and development. This study examined how cultural pluralism in our society, Nigeria, has affected and still affecting our national identity, and consequently shaping governmental structure, composition and activities, with extended effect of national development for global competitiveness. The study makes use of secondary data such as textbook, journals, newspaper, bulletin and government publications. It concluded, among others, that cultural pluralism has great effect on average Nigerian national identity, with antecedent effect on national decision and actions, which is resulting into crawling national development, impeding the nation on its expected global competitiveness.*

**Key word:** Cultural Pluralism, National Identity, Development, Allegiance, Global, Patriotism.

**INTRODUCTION**

Cultural diversity exists in most societies of the world. Cultural pluralism results when the practices of that society’s social, political and legal institutions are orientated to respect difference and value diversity in such a way that social cohesion is enhanced, rather than threatened. Cultural pluralism goes beyond cultural diversity: the latter merely acknowledges and tolerates cultural differences, whereas cultural pluralism involves the active seeking of understanding across difference.

Nigeria is a heterogeneous society with ethnic pluralism that is rooted in diverse cultures. There are many different languages such as Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Gbagi, Tiv, Idoma, Nupe, Egbira, Kanuri, Fulfude, Edo, Ijaw, Efik, Ibibio and so on, to be used as yardstick for determining the variability of Nigeria culture. Each of the ethnic groups in Nigeria has language as its element, and as in the views of Amali and Jekanyinfa (2013), they are self perpetuating biological groups, with identifiable interactive membership, value system, normative behaviour and a particular part of the state territory. Otite (1990) cited in Amali and Jekayinfa (2013) identified 374 ethnic groups in Nigeria, each with their different believes for values.

However, the amalgamation of these peoples, who are ethnically, religiously, culturally, and idiosyncratically different, coupled with the fact that structurally, the emergent regions before the amalgamation were practically of unequal sizes, unequal population, and operating as many systems of government as there were ethnic and cultural nationalities created the historical antagonistic centrifugal forces that have always worked to the advantage of the originators of the amalgamation (the colonialist). This is not only to the disadvantage of the amalgamated peoples (Nigerians), but may have well turned out to be at the expense of the corporate existence of the amalgamated peoples (Osimen, Balogun and Adenegan, 2013). These, till date affect our national identity and patriotism, especially on national matters.

From inception, Nigeria was heavily divided along ethnic lines. The Hausa – Fulani being a dominant group in the North, the Yoruba ethnic group dominated the West and the Igbos dominated the Eastern part of Nigeria. Tribal loyalties, Islamic and Christian religious faith has had a great impact on the social life of various ethnic groups in Nigeria. These have implication for national unity and identity after Nigeria’s independence in 1960. Also, the difference that existed between the North and the South in terms of economic resources and opportunities provided the platform for geo-political and economic rivalry soon after independence. This is because the Southern part of Nigeria had the advantage of better economic development because of its enormous natural resources and access to international water ways. These factors exposed the region to better economic, social and educational growth compared to the Northern part of the country.

Recent political arena in Nigeria suffers under hesitation and contradictory trends between globalisation and multiculturalism, and between localisation and ethnic identities, and seeks monoculturalism in respect of countries and people with similar culture coming together in cultural, social, economic co-operations and strategic alliances with those of different cultures and various civilizations that tend to be left outside of these cooperations because of their ‘differences’. This is evidenced in the composition of present Nigerian government, implementation of federal character principle, appointment of top government officials and allocation of national resources and national projects, with the consideration for generality, minority interest and fear of majority domination rather than for necessity, effectiveness, efficiency and national development for global competitiveness.

Cultural pluralism has been a dominant feature in man’s very recent history; and yet, there has been a general failure to consider its influence on Nigerian’s national identity and global competitiveness. The persistence of antecedent cultural influence in government composition, public policies, allocation of national resources and projects, election and appointment of government officials, government decisions and actions and citizens’ criticism of government actions, necessitate the study of cultural pluralism and national identity, its effect and challenges on Nigeria’s global competitiveness.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

**Dual Inheritance Theory (DIT)**

The study adopted Dual Inheritance Theory, which was also known as Geneculture or Biocultural evolution, developed in the 1960s through early 1980s to explain how human behavior is a product of two different and interacting evolutionary processes: genetic evolution and cultural evolution. Gene and culture, according to this theory continually interact in a feedback loop, changes in genes can lead to changes in culture which can then influence genetic selection, and vice versa. One of this theory’s central claims is that culture evolves partly through a Darwinian selection process, which dual inheritance theorist often describe by analogy to genetic evolution.

The theory viewed culture as socially learned behavior and social learning defined as copying behaviour through being taught by others in the environment. It is believed that genetic and cultural evolution interacted in the evolution of Homo sapiens. DIT recognizes that the natural selection of genotypes is an important component of the evolution of human behavior and that cultural trait can be constrained by genetic imperatives. The theory opined that cultural trait area transmitted differently from genetic traits and therefore, results in different population-level effects on behavioural variation.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Cultural Pluralism**

Cultural pluralism, it should be admitted to, as an analytical concept, runs through the distinct disciplines of anthropology, sociology, public administration and political science which make its understanding and application much more complex. At face value, it presents a matrix of culture competing for positions and relevance in the political schemes of things. Pluralism, as opposed to plurality, in political science, defines the existence of political power in diverse sources. In other words, it defines specifically the phenomenon of multiple competitions for political power. In this sense it can be distinguished from, or contrasted with monism. Before an elaboration of “types of cultural differentiation” will be accomplished in this study, first to be preoccupied with is perhaps what makes or accounts for cultural pluralism as a framework of analysis in political science and in particular, in analyzing Nigerian government and politics.

According to Crawford Young, the main types of cultural differentiation include: “ethnic, race, religion, caste and region” The question can then be asked: What does each term mean, and to what extent do they help to facilitate the understanding of cultural pluralism as a framework of analysis? While Young accepts “language, common cultural value or symbols” as defining characteristics of ethnic groups, he however, argues on the other hand, that: “territory or political unit”, even though are “frequent correlates”, “but not as universally valid criteria”. Race, in the opinion of Crawford Young, “remains potent factor as a subjective basis for social differentiation and collective consciousness”, since, he argues further, it is hinged and centered on colour. For religion, as an element of cultural pluralism, Crawford Young argues that: “is limited to the great world religions Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity”. According to him, “religion offers not only a comprehensive world view, but also an all-embracing social identity. Caste, in the opinion of Crawford Young, is a: “rigid, ranked system of social strata, endogamous and ascriptive”. He continues: “The ranked categories are often occupationally specialized. Ranked is constantly expressed and validated in interaction among the caste (Salami, 2015).

Cultural pluralism, it is here submitted, is both static and a-historical. Cultural pluralism, one restates, is therefore not appropriate for the study of the contradictions, the “you chop, l chop” mentality that ever remains the hallmark of Nigerian government and politics. By focusing on the outward appearance of the average Nigerian (specifically average Nigerian politician) without caring to look at the inner motives and thoughts that drive him, cultural pluralism remains a superficial theoretical framework with which the content, character and the body politics of Nigeria can be scientifically studied, analyzed and presented. The inner thoughts which drive an average Nigerian politician (professional and non-professional), are key to the understanding of the character of the Nigerian State, public policies and dealings with the outside world. Notwithstanding, cultural pluralism is unique in the sense that it provides an average body of thoughts in which the practice of politics can be viewed. The ethnic framework of analysis of which the book of O. Nnoli ever remains a standard presentation derives much inspirations and insights from cultural pluralism (Salami, 2015).

**National Identity**

National identity is very complicated and multi-dimensional matter. For this reason every researcher defines and explains this concept by emphasizing its different perspectives. For instance, Breuilly underlines the exclusive character of the national identity by regarding the relations between culture and nationalism distinguishing the nations from each other. On the other hand, Kymlicka refers to the civic nationalism by aiming to pinpoint its inclusive character by respecting the cultural differences. According to Gilroy national identity is a melting pot which has the assimilating character by depending on the notions of citizenship and patriotism (Frank and David, 2009; Husamettin and Feyzullah, 2013).

Anderson asserts that national identity is imagined and constructed. Rutherford claims that national identity depends on the uniformity, cultural community and common culture. Calhoun seeks the way to link the national identity to the theory of democracy by means of post-national social formations. Güvenç finds the origins of national identity in the national culture which will be obtained by the socialization processes. Yurdusev establishes a correlation between the national identity and state and he claims that national identity is the yield of nation-building and national ideology. Connor and Smith emphasizes the primordial character of national identity and they use the word ‘primordial’ in the meaning of its back-ward looking character seeking the myth of national origin. As a contrary, Bradshaw says that the national identity has a forward-looking character and this identity emerges with the politicisation of an ethnic group looking to the future destiny by sharing the same soil of the homeland (Husamettin and Feyzullah, 2013).

Breuilly, in his book entitled *Nationalism and the State* elaborates upon the relationship between culture and nationalism. For him this relationship always bears the traces of historical, ethical, and political forces that constitute the often shifting and contradictory elements of national identity. Central to the construction of right wing nationalism is a project of defending national identity through an appeal to a common culture that displaces any notion of national identity based upon a pluralized notion of culture with its multiple literacies, identities, and histories and erases histories of oppression and struggle for the working class and minorities'. According to Breuilly, “to the degree that the culture of nationalism is rigidly exclusive and defines its membership in terms of narrowly based common culture, nationalism tends to be xenophobic, authoritarian, and expansionist''(Husamettin and Feyzullah, 2013).

Rutherford claims that national identity based on a unified cultural community suggests a dangerous relationship between the ideas of race, intolerance, and the cultural membership of nationhood. Not only does such a position downplay the politics of culture at work in nationalism, but it erases an oppressive history forged in an appeal to a common culture and a reactionary notion of national identity. Pitting national identity against cultural difference not only appeals to an oppressive politics of common culture, but reinforces a political moralist that polices 'the boundaries of identity, encouraging uniformity and ensuring intellectual inertia'. Calhoun tries to combine the national identity and democracy by using the legal rights. In his words, ''in the first instance, national identity must be addressed as part of a broader consideration linking nationalism and post national social formations to a theory of democracy”. That is, the relationship between nationalism and democracy must address not only the crucial issue of whether legal rights are provided for all groups irrespective of their cultural identity, but also how structures of power work to ensure that diverse cultural communities have the economic, political, and social resources to exercise 'both the capacity for collective voice and the possibility of differentiated, directly interpersonal relations (Frank and David, 2009; Husamettin and Feyzullah, 2013).

Güvenç defines national identity as a kind of socialization manner processing that takes part in the individual within any certain community, or, it is a feeling of the state of belonging to any group by means of acculturation. It is the ‘we feeling’ which is shared by all individuals living within the certain geographical frontiers, in governing of the nation–state and with the creation of a national culture dependent on the historical and cultural perspective”. National identity is perceived inevitable for every community within the process of nationalization as the guarantee and base of the national existence (Frank and David, 2009). Yurdusev argues that the process of nation building or the construction of a nation can be comprehended within two levels. First of all, the rise of nation-state and second one is the dominance of the national ideology (Yurdusev 1997).

**Effect of Cultural Pluralism on National Identity**

Nigeria faces as a nation since independence is the task of processing cultural pluralism for national integration. The efforts to build one indivisible nation from the several ethnic nationalities have constituted problems as well. Some of the problems that emerged are sometimes not anticipated. They challenge the context to which cultural pluralism is directed for national integration after independence. Most of the problems have mal-integrative elements and still persist. They constitute a clog in the wheel of national progress and development. They infest social solidarity and damage economic and social development. Thus:

Ethno-Politico-Religious sentiments are widespread in Nigeria. These, at times, end up in the disruption of peace and order resulting into loss of innocent lives and destruction of properties. There have been incidences of such cases in Kano, Bauchi, Jos, Maiduguri, Aba, Zango- Kataf. The incessant incidents of mayhem and violence in Jos, Maiduguri, Kaduna and other parts of Nigeria have been linked to politico-ethnic problem. However, religions have been employed to ginger a National support to justify incidences leading to violence in Nigeria. It is in this respect that the Arch Bishop of Abuja has condemned the violence in Jos, not as religious but as due to social, economic, tribal and cultural differences (The Nation, March 12th 2010). The Nigerian Senate also said it cannot be a religious problem (Network Senate News, 15th March, 2010).

Added to this, is tribal loyalty and affiliation that have become a way of life of Nigerians especially when it relates to political power that dictates the economic wellbeing of the people. This sometimes translates into corrupt political practices as often witnessed in the conduct of elections in Nigeria. The political leadership is usually accused of appointing people that can help influence their chances of winning elections to head and administer the affairs of the Independent National Electoral Commission (I.N.E.C) - a body charged with conducting election to political offices in Nigeria. The same scenario goes with the judicial system in Nigeria. Where the organs that is supposed to be the moral umpire of it citizens often fails in its responsibilities of upholding justice and when they uphold justice such is often delayed. Thus, the judiciary is ineffective to check abuses in the society, more so that the rate of corruption within the judiciary itself creates doubts about its integrity. Public and media comments on Nigeria judiciary is at best not encouraging as there have been complaints and reports of high degree of corruption, favouritism, chauvinism and misapplication of justice based on tribal, religious and geo-political affiliation of Nigerian judges (The Nation, Thursday, July, 17, 2012).

To make matters worse, Nigeria, though rich in mineral, natural and human resources is still a poor country and rated as the 43th poorest nation in the world (Wikipedia, 2018). Her poverty has been attributed to misappropriation of public funds, lack of efficient planning and control of Nigeria economic resources. The rate of national unemployment is high at 34% (National Bureau of Statistic, 2016). These are attributes that breed idleness among Nigeria youths leading to the creation of anti-social vices such as theft, armed robbery, thurgery and so on, prevalent in the Nigeria society. These are problems that urgently need to be addressed in the efforts to build a united, indivisible and virile nation, was a product of policy summersault which is not farfetched from lack of national identity due to cultural pluralism.

Further, every Nigerian is conscious of his origin, place of birth and language spoken. Thus, most problems and crisis are viewed and addressed in relation to these concepts. These are psychic that constitutes great problems for Nigeria as a nation. Also, Nigeria educational curriculum has failed to address these problems. Thus, there has not been a desired consciousness that would lead us to a strong and united democratic society has contained in our 1999 Nigeria Constitution. From the foregoing, it could rightly be said, that cultural pluralism has caused many problems in the polity and lives of Nigerian people. Many people are aware of its implications and consequences for Nigeria as a nation state.

**Cultural Pluralism and Globalization**

The encapsulating global developments in the areas of trade and investments liberalization, information science and technology, and popular empowerment in the decision making processes, have, without argument, questioned the utility and continued application of cultural pluralism to the study and understanding of contemporary Nigerian political structure and processes.

Beginning from the mid-1980s, especially following the introduction of structural adjustment by the Babangida administration which he implemented alongside a Transition to Civil Rule Programme, there emerged the sudden upsurge in the activities of groups and individuals, especially civil society groups and individuals concerned primarily with the entrenchment of fundamental core values of democracy without regard to the politics of fractionalization of Nigeria along the precolonial social formations that make it up. Nigerians, as attested to by the annulled June 12, 1993 Presidential Election, and perhaps influenced by the global waves of democratization of the 1990s and the driven ethos of contemporary public administration and management such as transparency and accountability, have come to recognize the indivisibility of the country and the rejection of the bifurcation of the processes of allocation of values along primordial considerations and criteria. E-mail practices in the banking, insurance and financial sectors of the contemporary Nigerian economy and society have jointly facilitated a renewal process of national integration and development to the extent that primordial attachments and ties are fastly being discouraged. Through internet services, Nigerians, for example, want to know happenings around and beyond their cultural confinements on daily basis, and this, they remain committed (Salami, 2015 & Amali and Jekayinfa, 2013).

**Discussions**

The notion of the ‘other’ is inextricably linked to the concept of national identity. The opposition to the other is taken as an intrinsic feature of nationalism in most theories even though the influence that the other has in the definition of national identity remains largely unexplored. Cultural pluralism seeks active understanding across differences, with the intention of enhancing the spirit of nationalism.

Nigeria identified with over 250 ethnics group, each with their own language and culture and expected to pull effort together to engender development that will ensure global competitiveness, in the face of numerous natural resources at its disposal, is firstly faced with problem of national identity as a result of cultural diversity. The heterogeneity of Nigeria society forms the basis of the system of government being practiced to reduce the tension of fear of domination by majority ethnic group.

This same issue is determining the election and appointment of government officials, introduction of federal character principles, education curriculum, public policy and government actions. Average Nigerian tends to identify with their ethnicity, such as Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, etc before thinking about the country, especially on matters that involves national resources and development. The composition of governments and the present government is evidenced on the fact that, culture is affecting national identity in Nigeria. There is no gainsaying that this idea is affecting public policy and allocation of national resources for national development, expected to ensure global competitiveness. Debates on the floor of National Assembly are usually affected by sentiment for represented constituency to get national project, rather for necessity, effectiveness and efficiency for comparative advantage of the nation. This shows in all sector of the economy, including education sector, with sentiment for admission, allocation of educational fund and resources. For instance, establishment of Universities by the last administration of President Goodluck Jonathan to the Six Geopolitical Zones is just for ethnicity reason rather than on necessity, despite some region having enough university. These actions will have effect on technological development of the region affected and national development.

It was discovered from literature reviewed that, average Nigerian thinks about his tribe, ethnicity, religion and culture first before considering national interest on issues of national concerns. This affects patriotic state of mind in making decision and actions on national matters, and eventual contributions to national development which will enhance Nigeria technological innovation and Global competitiveness.

**Conclusion**

The quest for nation building for global competitiveness should be based on terms of Nigeria cultural rating systems, which are the commonly yielded values that hold Nigerians together. Like Giddens (2006) stated, this should be expressed in symbolic ways, like the food we eat, the cloth we wear, the language we speak, norms and values that would be relevant to promoting National integration, peace and social justices in Nigeria.

To attain the goal of achieving unity within diversity, there is need for a well planned and modified educational programmes and socialisation process for Nigerian, to address the problems that arise as a result of cultural differences in Nigeria. This should be in the light of how they influence the various cultures, individuals and Nigerians in general. There should be the promotion of social justice and equity, through accommodation and deliberate use of education for cultural, political, social and economic development of every society and the well being of individuals in Nigeria. This will enhance national identity, especially among the younger generation, for patriotic decisions and actions, channeled toward national development for global competitiveness.

**Recommendation**

Based on the study, the following recommendation will enhance national identity among citizens, and improve national development.

1. Civic engagementapproaches and tools can help foster links across identity groups through forums for civic engagement (for example civic networks, trade unions, agricultural cooperatives and professional associations). Civil society organisations can provide spaces for orientation about the importance of national identity.
2. Culturalapproaches and tools are widely recognised as useful resources to build communication and understanding between groups – through, for example funding sports, educational, and cultural programmes.
3. Dialogueapproaches and tools can be useful to help understand how to foster cooperation and social cohesion among various ethnicity – encouraging wider social change by confronting myths, perceptions and stereotypes of the ‘other’.
4. Decentralisationapproaches in certain contexts can reduce group competition and facilitate the complementary existence of different identities. Over concentration of governmental functions at the center affect power tussle for the center by all major ethnic group in the country.
5. Building inclusive institutionsacross identity divides is key, especially to ensure that law and order, policing and justice approaches and tools are equitable and serve the interests of all citizens, to enhance national identity.

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