# University Qualitative Education: An Instrument of National Integration and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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## Abstract

*Education serves as an instrument for promoting socio-economic, political, integration and cultural development of any nation. Hence, this paper examined the role of university qualitative education as an agent of integration and development. The paper posited that one of the major factors that deter national integration and unity in Nigeria is the inability of many Nigeria citizens to demonstrate core national values of patriotism, tolerance in terms of (politics, social, ethnic and religion); cooperation, honesty and obedience. It was discussed in the paper that presently, value for wealth, materialism, religion and ethnic loyalty are prominent among a number of Nigerians while civic values that can promote unity are relegated to the background. However, Nigeria cannot attain national integration that could foster expected development and national transformation without acquiring quality education and demonstrate required values and traits most especially in the University system. It was noted that appropriateness of educational qualities in the university system will enhance unity in culture, religion, politics, social and economic transformation since no nation can develop beyond the quality of its education. Therefore, tolerance, co-operation and feeling of brotherhood should guide one in maintaining the national unity of our country through quality training in the university's education. This is expected to foster the desired sustainable development in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Qualitative University Education, Integration, Development, Quality Assurance.

## Introduction

Education has often been identified as an instrument of development, societies and individuals. Hence as a way of life, it serves as a means of transmission and preservation of the core values in every culture. Education provides the foundation and the necessary spring board to launch the country on the path of technological and economic development. Therefore, the role of education as an instrument for promoting the socio-economic, political, integration and cultural development of any nation can never be over-emphasized. Quality education remains the bedrock of integration and development in any nation. Salako (2012) sees development as the constant improvement in the quality of life in a nation through the improvement of the productive capabilities of individuals. In achieving this, Universities educate future leaders and develop the high-level technical capacities that strengthen economic growth and development through ensuring qualities and standard at all levels (Odekunle, 2001).

Quality of education is crucial to the existence of every society. Thus, developed and developing nations take it as a priority and would ensure that attention is paid to i Quality of education has been the main concern of the Nigerian government and like other countries in the world; ensuring quality assurance is paramount especially at th university level so that graduates of Universities would be confident of their skills. Th National Universities Commission (NUC) takes responsibility for ensuring qualit assurance in Nigerian universities; it also ensures that priority is given to quality academic staff to be employed and students to be admitted respectively. A nation growth and development is determined by its human resources. The provision of th much-needed manpower to accelerate the growth and development of the economy ha been said to be the main relevance of university education in Nigeria (Ibukun, 1997).

Precisely, the National Policy on Education (2004), highlighted the aims university education as sighted in Ajayi and Ekundayo (2008),: (a) contribute to nation development through high-level relevant manpower training, (b) develop and inculca proper values for the survival of the individual and the Society, (c) develop th intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local an external environments, (d) acquire both physical and intellectual skills which wi enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society, (f) promote an encourage scholarship and community service, (g) forge and cement national unity; ar (h) promote national and international understanding and interactions. If all these are be achieved in our educational system, a concerted effort has to be made through th appropriate logistics in ensuring desired quality of education most especially in o universities which will gear towards integrating our nation at every level.

## Nigerian Universities and Quality Assurance

The concept of quality has been defined differently by different stakeholde and scholars which may depends on the dimensions one is looking at it. Quality education can be accepted as being multi-faceted due to the different inputs of educatio organization and management, content of learning and learning outcomes (Comfor 2014). Quality can be defined as "fitness for purpose". It encapsulates the concept meeting commonly agreed precepts or standards. Such standards may be defined by lav an institution, a coordinating body or a professional society that are saddled with suc responsibility. Quality refers to the standard of a phenomenon when it is compared other things like it: how good or bad something is, that is, to be of good/poor/top qualit

or of a high standard. In this context, it is associated with the 'monitoring and evaluation component of education' to see whether the outcome is good and of the intended standard (Obadara & Alaka, 2013). Quality is the ability or degree with which a product, service, or phenomenon conforms, to an established standard, and which makes it to be relatively superior to others. With respect to education, this implies the ability or degree with which an educational system conforms to the established standard and appropriateness, of the inputs available for the delivery of the system (Usman, 2016). Quality in education therefore means the relevance and appropriateness of the education programme to the needs of the community for which it is provided. It is on this note that every stakeholder in education industry is positioned to ensure the assurance indeed. Olugbenga and Yakubu (2021) posited that the components of quality in education can be accessed on the basis of the inputs, processes, environment and output. Inputs here include the teachers, trainees, instructional materials, and the curriculum as a whole. Processes in this context involve instructional delivery system, evaluation and assessment methods. The environment has to do with classroom organization and control, interaction between different components of the instructional situation.

Oderinde (2004) enumerated two aspects of quality in education, which are both internal and external. The internal aspect is the implementations of the school objectives while the external aspect deals with the implementation of national objectives which are pre-requisites to the achievement of quality in any educational institution. Middlehurst (2001), described the scope of quality assurance as including the following dimensions:

Regulation (legal frameworks, governance, responsibilities and accountabilities etc.)

Educational process (admissions, registration or enrolment, curriculum design and delivery, support for leaving, assessment, etc.)

Curriculum design and content (validation and approval frameworks, levels and standards etc.)

Learning experience (consumer protection, students' experience, complaints and appeals etc.)

Outcomes (qualifications, certificates, transcripts, security, transferability, recognition/ currency and value etc.)

In summary, these qualities are expected to serve as guiding standard in ensuring that the aims and objectives of University education are actualized as it has been stipulated in the national policy on education.

## Quality Assurance and National Integration

The National Universities Commission (NUC 2006), defined quality assurance as the systematic review of educational programme to ensure that acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained. As part of the efforts to ensure qualitative University education in Nigeria, the NUC was particular about ensuring accreditation of academic programme in Nigerian universities in order to produce graduates who are relevant to the Nigeria economy Ajayi and Ekundayo (2007). Emphasis was laid on the quality of academic staff and students to be admitted and employed respectively. The commission is committed to improving the quality of university programs through injection of requisite inputs as well as assuring quality process and outputs based on the decree 49 of 1988 that widens its scope. The

philosophical objective of quality assurance is the decision of educational progra ... to train individuals to achieve competency in a given area of industrial production function; the focus therefore on the side of industry is the training of employees to prevent problems, strengthening organizational systems and continually improving performance (EISB, 2005). The recent concept of quality assurance is the ability of educational institutions to meet the need of the user of manpower in relation to the quality of skills acquired by their products, that is, students. The quality of an academic program becomes a universal concern because the product of one university invariably becomes an employee in another university or other cultures' industrial setting. Also degree obtained at the end of the training in a university is intended to ascertain the level of competency (Ijeoma & Osagie, 2005). Quality assurance is a key component of successful internationalization; a mechanism for building institutional reputation in the competitive local and global arena and a necessary foundation for consumer protection (NUC, 2004). These natures of qualities in the universities always serve as boost to national integration.

The dictionary meaning of 'integrity' is the state of being whole and undivided upholding territorial integrity and national sovereignty (Kaur, 2012). Origin of this word from French intégrité or Latin integritas, meaning integral, and integrate. Nigerian nation is composed of the people by many religious and cultural beliefs but are unified by certain emotional forces. This is the process of national integration. The main objective of national integration is to encounter all fissiparous forces/tendencies, which is posing threat to the Nigerian nation. National integration is a complex concept. It has social, political, religious, regional and economic dimensions. The basic factors of national integration; Ideological unity and awareness about 'national objectives' should be created among the people who hold divergent views on political and religious and similar other fields. Its main aim is to promote among the people; unity, peace, affection and brotherhood. Salzer (2006) and Sander (2010) believes that a community is integrated when it has:

an effective control over the means of violence;

a center of decision-making that significantly affected the allocation of resources and rewards; and

a dominant focus of political identification for a large majority of national citizens who are politically aware.

National integration is the creation of a feeling of oneness where the diversities are recognized and respected by imbibing a sense of nationhood (Kaur, 2012). National integration is a multi-dimensional concept, with many inter-locking elements that operate independently to some degree but yet are also interactive, cumulative and generally complementary. It is also holistic in the sense that an integrated community is often more viable than each of its constituent parts. It is a highly complex phenomenon in the sense that what is integrative on the one hand may be disintegrative on another; and it is a dynamic construct in the sense that 'once integrated does not mean always integrated.

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 (Sander, 2010). 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 culture.

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. Ifeanaccho 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. 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.

However, quality assurance is the ability of educational institutions to meet the need of the user of manpower in relation to the quality of skills acquires by their products, that is, students. It is important to note that appropriateness of educational qualities in the university system will enhance unity in culture, religion, political, social and economic dimensions.

## Challenges of Quality in Nigerian Universities

Earlier in Nigeria, it was glaringly obvious that the university was regarded as the single most important industry for the production of high-level manpower and the capstone of the entire educational system. University training according to Ume (2009) aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, cultivating the public mind, purifying the national taste, supplying the principles of popular aspirations and giving enlargement and sobriety to ideas of the age. It is not surprising then that stakeholders in University education tend to guard jealously the integrity of the university and the quality of graduates produced. Record shows that Nigerian Universities have been producing high quality graduates in the past. As affirmed by Daisi (2007), many graduates from the nation's universities have distinguished themselves in their areas of specialization so much so that some of them are now professors in the best universities across the globe. This attestation is quite resounding in that quality entrants were developed into quality graduates. Due to the declining quality in recent years, however, the accolade attached to Nigerian Universities seems to have faded away. The above could be attributed to lack of quality control, poor funding, inadequacy of qualified staff and the inability of the concerned government and relevant agencies to implement the necessary policies that can enable the University to achieve its set goals and objectives.

## Education and National Integration for Sustainable Development

Development involves not only economic but also social, political, cultural, moral and religious upliftment of the vast majority of the populace. Economic development is much more encompassing which is a multidimensional and multifaceted concept because it denotes not only an increase in the GNP of a country but also an increase in general welfare and standard of living of the vast majority of the people in

that country. The relationship between quality educations, integration for development is straight forward in meaning. To develop in this sense, means creating an appropriate standard of education processes that will serve as a catalyst of development at all levels (Odigie and Odionye, 2013). According to Adedeji (2014) Sustainable development which indicates an all-round development of a nation and its resources depends on quality university education that transforms a relatively unskilled person to skilled human capital and inquire into various fields of knowledge for the benefit of mankind National integration and development cannot be built by bricks and mortar. It cannot be built by chisel or hammer. It has to grow silently in the minds and hearts of men. The only process is the process of qualitative education, most especially at university level. This could be achieved through the following: National Policy on Education, redesigning the curriculum, redesigning the textbooks, organizing co-curricular activities and international understanding to suit the enhancement of national integration that will lead to sustainable development.

Nigeria is blessed with immense human and natural resources which if properly harnessed will bring about rapid developments to the country. It is very unfortunate to discover that most of these resources are being under-utilized as a result of corruption, selfishness on the part of our leader and the inability of the University to appropriate the quality of education in implementing the focus of National Policy on Education both in content and structure that can drive integration and development in the nation. 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 cannot be over-emphasized. This is the major thing that can guarantee national integration, peace, unity which will as well aid development in the country. There is a need for qualitative education at the higher level of education to ensure the integration for the desired development.

There cannot be national integration that can influence development without understanding the character of the nation and there cannot be communal harmony unless we intrinsically believe in the validity of diffierent beliefs and approaches. When these factors are taken into consideration, it can be seen that national integration is a complex problem and political integration is only one part of it. It is beyond doubt that the threats of disintegration are staring this nation in the face.

## Suggestions
The following recommendations were made:

- There is urgent need to rethink about the nation's basic political and cultural concepts, reinterpret them, and be bold to emphasize them through educational system, political behaviour and social environment.
- Socio-economic and cultural diffierences are to be avoided also. Caste discriminations should be eradicated.
- Nigerians must realize that we have the strong bond of same cultural heritage and must not let ourselves fall apart and disintegrate.
- Nigerians must show to the world that a country with as old a tradition as ours can holds back personal diffierences for the sake of higher interest of the country. Tolerance, co-operation and feeling of brotherhood should guide us in maintaining the national unity of the country.

- Also, government should ensure that the principles of federal character are observed in the implementation of any policy in order to achieve equity and evenly distribution of national resources.
- There should be adequate funding of university education, government through it agency (TETFUND) enhances the human capacity building that can drive the desire qualities in the university system.
- Government should subsidize the university education to make it affordable for the less privilege. Also, core values, patriotism, tolerance and cultural development and technology should form the centre stage of university education's curriculum in order to ensure the national integration for sustainable development.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that the quality of University education determines the quality of human resources of a country. One of the major objectives of the universities is to produce a qualified, skilled and globally competent workforce for the labour market of business and industry, which is a critical factor to national integration, growth and development since no nation can develop beyond the quality of its education. Nigeria cannot attain national integration that could foster expected development and national transformations without acquiring quality education and demonstrate required values and traits most especially in the university system.

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