

**DIVERSITY, STRENGTH FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:
NIGERIA PERSPECTIVE.**

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ABSTRACT

Diversity is a satisfying mix of ideas and cultures and other characteristic necessary for promoting growth. It is the total immersion and comprehensive integration of various cultures, experiences and people for the development of a nation. This literature based paper x-rayed how the nomenclature Nigeria came into existence. It studied the plurality and ethnic diversity of Nigeria. It went further to explore how diversity has been positively maximized for the development of some African and European countries including the USA. The paper stressed the fact that ethnic, economic, political and religious diversities in Nigeria will contribute to national development if harnessed properly through human capital development.

KEY WORDS: Diversity, Strength, National Development, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION:

The name Nigeria was invented by Flora Shaw in the year 1897. Shaw was a journalist from Britain who worked as a colonial editor for the Times Newspaper. The Founder of UAC, which later became Royal Niger Company, with Headquarters at Lokoja, in the present day Kogi State, Sir George Taubman Goldie, was the one who probably brought Flora Shaw to Africa. Flora Shaw became the wife of Lord Lugard in the year 1902. She invented the name Nigeria after River Niger; which means People staying or residing around the Niger River. She noted through her diction via a letter to Times Newspaper of London, the name Royal Niger Company seems misleading, a name not convenient to pronounce, hence her suggestion to coin a shorter nomenclature to represent the areas under the British protectorate which was before now tagged Pagan Mohamedan states.

According to her, the name may and should not affect the other parts of African neighbours. However, it should be solely for British covered territories by Royal Niger Company. Such territories included the colony of Lagos and Niger protectorate of the coast.

After this background on the origin of Nigeria, the question is “who are Nigerians?”

Nigeria, a country colonized by the British, gained her independence in the year 1960 and became a republic in 1963. Nigeria operates currently a presidential system of government and has a population challenge faced by the unification of the well over 200 plus ethnic groups and cultures identified with its borders Akobo (2015).

These ethnic groups calls for, or make up what we refers to as Diversity.

THE CONCEPT OF DIVERSITY:

According to the Advanced Learners’ Dictionary, diversity is defined as an array of numerous things or people that are truly distinct from one another. From the foregoing, if the definition above is accepted, then, Nigeria being a pluralistic nation can be qualified as a diverse nation. Diversity no doubt is strength. Africa we has the most diverse cultures and religions. Let us briefly look at such African countries and how they use their diversity.

Madagascar is a small country by the coast of Africa with a population figure estimated at about 22.2Millions as at 2013. She is indeed the fourth largest island in world. This country is the most famous and leading exporter of coffee. Wildlife conservation has endowed her with the choice of a tourist nation. The country is a fusion of East African immigrants and the Austronesia’s people (Asian

descent). Though their ethnic diversity was in line with their settlement pattern and occupation, they still survive as a united country.

South Africa consists of both Black and White Africans. The country had a population of about 55.9 million in 2016. The Black native Africans are made up of 61% of the whole population; while the Whites are made of 36%. The remaining 3%, speak diverse and entirely different unique languages of German and Portuguese including sundry cultures. Despite these diversities evident in languages, color, descents; the South Africans are now united economically and politically after the much fought apartheid that almost tore them apart. Recently they are a leading force in the export of Gold, Diamond, Corn, Metals, Minerals, Sugar, and Wool.

Uganda is another multi-ethnic country. The country was galvanized after three (3) kingdoms of Buganda, Bunyoro, and the Ankole. Uganda situates in East Africa with a population of about 35.9 millions (2014 estimate). Among her exports are cotton, hides and skin, fruits, etc. Despite her diversity she still has a united country called Uganda.

Liberia is yet another African country with diverse ethnic concentration. Liberia is in West Africa, founded in 1822 by American colonialists. Her population as at 2014 was estimated at about 4.092 million. Her system of Government is presidential. The Liberians are African slaves of different ethnic cultures and religions. The Liberians are exporters of Timber, Rubber, Iron, Diamonds, Cocoa and Coffee. The varied ethnic backgrounds did not debar them from forging ahead as a united country. The civil war of 1990 could not tear them apart but kept them intact contributing to the international economy. Africa is not a stand alone in diversity; the advanced countries such as United States of America and the United Kingdom also are involved.

The **United Kingdom** is another nation with ethnic coloration. The UK consists of four (4) countries. The countries are England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The UK parliament is situated in London. England's population is the highest. She occupies a total area of 54% of the entire kingdom.

The strength of United Kingdom, transverses from military to economic. The UK is the fifth largest national economy in the world. It is rated second in the economy of European Union. The UK has the third maximum share of global pharmaceutical industry (department of health, 2011). Despite their multi-ethnic history, they are still forging ahead in one parliament, military and the economy.

“Diversity is not a matter of how we vary; Diversity is about accepting one’s uniqueness” (Joseph, 1999).

To former American president Jimmy Carter, “We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic: Different people, varied beliefs, diverse aspirations, different hopes, varied dreams”.

Catherine Pulsifier (1999), in describing life noted that “*we are all different, which is great because we are all unique. Without diversity life will be very boring*”.

Diversity plays a very cardinal and essential role in one’s existence.

THE CONCEPT OF STRENGTH

According to the Advanced Learners Dictionary, Strength means to become successful. There are different interpretations to strength depending on usage or the context it is used.

For instance it could be used for physical strength bravery, power or influence, feelings, opinions, natural force, group number, etc.

On the context under discuss, we absorb it from “*power and influence*”. When a nation is economically sound and she controls her resources, we say that such a nation’s economic and political strength is weighty. When you have political powers you control the economic powers hence a developed nation is measured by her Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

This leads us to development.

DEVELOPMENT

Development as a concept is multifaceted. Some scholars see or define development from the dimension of growth. Some also view it from political, economic and social perspectives.

Development is an improvement on societal or national status considering the living standard of her people. Dudley (1969) in Njoku (2015), societal development is subdivided into three (3) stages.

- 1) The physical Stage.
- 2) The Vital Stage.
- 3) The mental Stage.

For more emphasis, the physical stage is the struggle stage of self sustenance. Interest is more on basic needs of individuals or a nation: what to eat, what to put on, where to live, etc. Traditionally, this can also be measured by the number of wives, children, Landed properties and possibly the size of farm lands one possesses.

Next to this stage of development is the **vital stage**.

This stage is associated with the changes of the society. Emphasis moved from subsistence to commercial or industrialization.

With reference to Njoku (2015) the term vital denote the emotional and nervous energies that empower society drive towards accomplishment and express most directly in the interaction among humans.

The last stage is that of **mental development**. This stage concerns advancement of practical, social and political application to real life.

I, call this stage the “*hyper stage of development*”. Innovations and improvement is made as the day rolls by in all facets of life. What then is National Development?

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Development is concern primarily with people not with things, such as institutions and project. Project and institutions are only means to development (Akukwe, 1988). Whether we rate a nation’s development on her Gross National Products (GNP) or on her Gross Domestic Products (GDP), at the centre of it all is human which Akukwe (1988), referred above as “**PEOPLE**”. Man is in-separatable from his nation. “The greatest asset of any nation is its people and their various abilities” (Maduka1980). To buttress this, each time an achievement is made, the **glory** is ascribed to that nation or country. The uniqueness of humans has been scientifically established that human beings are more superior to other living beings. Human beings reasons and learn to solve societal problems including new inventions. Humans are endowed with superior mental gifts and adaptability prowess. No wonder he conquers his physical environment. Man’s development on its own academically, is what we can adduce as “National Development”. All aspects of development, whether socially, economically, morally, politically, technologically, etc are all encapsulated in man’s development.

IS DIVERSITY STRENGTH FOR NIGERIA’S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Nigeria population estimate with well over 182.2millions people in 2015 and over 250 ethnic nationalities cannot be treated in isolation in development and diversity concept. If that is true, then what is imperative is human development. A nation’s development is hinged on her human development and not on infrastructure alone. “Development is concerned primarily with people and not with things , such as institution and project” (Akukwe, 1988:22). The problem with Nigeria is none of her population, numerous ethnic nationalities with diverse historical, cultural and

religious milieu, territorial challenges, etc. What is attacking Nigeria more is leadership war. In Achebe's diction, "... Nigeria is simply and indeed squarely a failure of leadership" (Achebe, 1983). Nigeria is blessed naturally in landmass, climate, water bodies, vegetations, etc; how to harness these natural resources and ensure for prudent and maximal utilization is her problem, which of course focused on leadership. If Nigeria resources and diverse skills are properly utilized the current agitations by various ethnic and regional groups for self-governance would not arise.

Today Nigerians are known professionals and technocrats worldwide despite her ethnic diversity. **Dr Adesina Akinwumi**, is currently the African Development Bank president. He is a Nigerian from the Yoruba extraction (an ethnic group).

Mrs Amina Mohammed, the current Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, is a Nigerian from the Hausa ethnic extract.

Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, was the MD of the World Bank (2007-2011). At present she is a member of the International Advisory Panel of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). She is of the Igbo extraction from the south-eastern part of Nigeria.

Mr. Ufot Ekong, is a Nigerian from Akwa-Ibom State of the south-south region. He made Nigeria proud in Japan Tokai University when he solved a mathematical puzzle which students were unable to solve in the school for well over 30years. At 24years, he was reported as the best all rounder first 1st class graduate of Electrical Engineering, a feat not achieved for the past 50 years in the university.

Other areas of national achievements, our diversities notwithstanding include sports (football, athletics, etc), Music; Religion (recognized international gospel preachers, etc).

Thousands and millions of professionals and technocrats from Nigeria who have excelled abound in the world.

In Ola Joseph's diction, "*Diversity is not a matter of how we vary; Diversity is about accepting one's uniqueness*". Nigeria's uniqueness is endowed with intelligent skills that need to be harnessed via human resources and capital development.

CONCLUSION:

Diversity has no effect on Nigeria's development. America is developed and talked about today is because she is not of one race but diverse race. Rev. Jesse Jackson asserted "*America not like a blanket-one piece of unbroken cloth. American is more like quilt-many patches, many pieces, many colors, many sizes, all woven together by a common thread*".

Nigeria population and diversity should be maximally utilized for more developmental strides. There is no harm in Nigeria Diversity; therefore we, recommend that what Nigeria need is to develop her people using the abundant God given natural resources and its diversity to make her people a "**CAPITAL ASSET**".

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