Challenges and the Roles of School Management in Students’ Behavioral Modification for Enhancement of National Cohesiveness

LOVE EBUK
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5218-285X
ebuklove7@gmail.com
Department of Educational Administration and Planning
Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria.

GRACE SIMADI OLOWONEFA
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3695-5381
gracesimadi7@gmail.com
Department of Educational Administration and Planning
Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

The achievement of national cohesion is one of the issues confronting Nigeria as a nation. The study therefore assessed challenges and the role of school management in students’ behavioural modification for the enhancement of national cohesiveness. The investigation was conducted in the University of Abuja. Two objectives and research questions guided the study and descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of six hundred and ninety (690) students from the Department of Educational Administration and Planning of the University of Abuja. The sample consisted of 360 students that were randomly selected from among the students of the Department of Educational Administration and Planning of the
University of Abuja. A questionnaire titled “Challenges and Management’s Role in Students’ Behavioural Modification” (CMRSBM) was used as instrument for data collection. The researcher found among others that unhealthy relationship among various ethnic groups, favoritism on ethno-religious ground by some management staff affect the achievement of national cohesiveness negatively. Also, it was revealed that the school management play active role in modifying students’ behaviour for national cohesion. Recommendations were made among which include that school management should ensure good governance at all facets of the school administration and they should show leadership by example.

KEYWORDS

Ethnocentrism, National Cohesiveness, Behavioral Modification, Management, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country of multi-ethnic composition and diverse cultures. There are over 300 ethnic groups in Nigeria (Musa, 2016). Nigeria’s three largest ethnic groups, the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo represent about 70 percent of the total population. About 10 percent of the total population consists of several other groups numbering more than one million members each, including the Kanuri, Tiv, and Ibibio (Musa, 2016; Stock, 2008). More than 300 smaller ethnic groups account for the remaining 20 percent of the population. Languages spoken in Nigeria are: English (official), Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani, Efik (Annang/Ibibio/Efik), Ijaw, Edo, Etsako, Esan, Benis and others.

But one of the greatest challenges of various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria is the problems of how to achieve national cohesion. According to Atiku (2017), national cohesion refers to 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. That sense of solidarity encourages them to invest economically, socially, politically and emotionally in the wellbeing of the nation-country. National cohesion does not mean the absence of disagreements but those disagreements play out and are resolved within the parameters laid out by the country’s laws and regulations and in a manner that preserves that sense of oneness (Atiku, 2017).

Enem (2004) noted that ethnicity and cultural pluralism have been identified as twin catalysts in the amplification of rift and discontent in Nigeria. Nigerian political leaders differentiate themselves on the basis of historical origin, though they have a common identity; being Nigerians. The political leaders were better seen as Northerners, Westerners and Easterners than Nigerians. This brings unhealthy relationship among the existing ethnic groups in the country. The outcome of the unhealthy relation includes
ethnic rivalry, favoritism, and marginalization. This postpones collectivity in the pursuit of national unity and cohesion in every facet of national life including the educational sector and at the tertiary institutions of learning in particular.

The tertiary institutions of learning are predominantly dominated by students with youthful age. According to National Universities Commission (2018), 1.9 million students are currently studying in 164 universities across the country. These students are from different ethno-religious background across the 36 states including the Federal Capital Territory. This implies that in the universities in particular, every culture is impliedly represented. These students however have varying degree of orientation based on their socio-cultural and religion background. According to Oyeyemi (2006), some of these students have developed ethnocentrism and religious sentiments. That is, the feeling that their culture and religious are superior to others. Therefore, relationship between students of diverse ethno-religious orientation in the campus is characterized by mutual suspicion, lack of cordiality, and fear in some instance. This has posed a problem in the attempt to build up a united Nigeria.

What then is the role of the school management in modifying students’ behaviour in order to enhance national cohesiveness? Significantly, the school is established basically to give formal education to students, to inculcate in them, ideals, habits, attitudes, cultural value and other social characteristics that will make them to become useful member of the society. The all-round education (cognitive, affective and psychomotor) that the school provide is a foundation upon which the social and moral life of students are formed. Therefore, the significance of school management in the process of modification of students’ behaviour in order to promote national cohesiveness can never be over-emphasized. The management of Nigerian Universities in particular needs to be dynamic in dealing with students in order to promote national cohesion. It is on this basis that this paper examined the concept of management, national cohesion, challenges and the role of school management in students’ behavioural modification in enhancing national cohesiveness.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The broad aim of this study is to assess the challenges and role of school management in students’ behavioural modification for the enhancement of national cohesiveness. The study also sought to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Identify the challenges affecting the achievement of national cohesiveness in Nigeria.
2. Evaluate management roles to students’ behavioural modification for promoting national cohesion.
Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework offers the guide for analysis; it shows the direction of the study and places the work in a vantage point within a research world. There are many theories that explain moral development in many ways; however, the theoretical foundation upon which this study is based is “Platonism Theory of Moral Development”.

Platonism Theory of Moral Development

According to Adefuye (2005), Plato's teaching on moral development is summarized in his dictum “virtue is knowledge, vice is ignorance.” According to the theory, evil is due to lack of knowledge. No one does anything evil willingly. One is wicked or commits a crime or does something bad because he does not know it to be bad. It is done out of ignorance. One is good when he knows the right thing to do and does it. Plato recommends that discipline and self-control are necessary in order to ensure that we do the right thing; we know to be good and avoid the bad thing, we know to be evil or wrong. According to Plato, moral behaviour requires moral understanding.

In relation to the present study, the position of Plato holds. Students in the Universities are naturally good, but need to be guided by their parents at home or the University management who are the secondary agent of child’s socialization. When students are properly nurtured, trained and taught by parents and the school management about the societal norms, cultural values and tradition, they are likely to grow up to become responsible adults. They are likely to respect the elders, teachers in the school and equally conduct themselves appropriately in any environment they find themselves and also work towards the promotion of national unity. But when they do not have adequate knowledge about societal norms and values or are not given proper home training by their parents, and trained very well in the University, they are more likely to become bad and constitute nuisance to the society at large.

Challenges Affecting the Achievement of National Cohesiveness in Nigeria

According to Olatunji (2007), national cohesiveness is based on the fact that societies and individuals can only achieve their potentials when they live and work together, but in Nigeria, achievement of national cohesion is a day dream owing to the following challenges:

1. Ethno-Religious Intolerance: Ethno-religious intolerance and conflict is visible in Nigerian society. Nigeria has three powerful religions - Traditional religion, Christianity and Islam. Each religion claims superiority over others, and hold the belief that all those who worship anything differently from their own are condemned and should be discriminated against. This often lead to inter and intra-religious conflicts in Nigeria and even in the tertiary institutions. According to Njoku (2004), the outbreak of ethno-religious conflicts has led to loss of many lives and property and displacement of thousands of people as well as intolerance and hatred.
2. **Corruption:** Corruption which is now a household word in Nigerian society is another problem affecting national cohesion. Corruption pervades all strata of the society from the highest level of the political and business elites to the ordinary person in the village. Corruption exists when public funds are embezzled by people in government or its agencies; when bribe is demanded before performing a formal duty in public offices even in the campuses; when merit is neglected and ethnic or religion affiliation is considered in recruitment of workers, appointment of people into positions and admission into schools (Eze, 2003). Corruption places some managers of the tertiary institutions above the law and encourages illegality. It destroys meritocracy, trust and enthrones mediocrity, inefficiency, mistrust and unproductivity in the country.

3. **Fear of Domination:** The fear of domination whether actual or imagined by some ethnic groups is creating divisiveness among Nigerians. It is one of the background conditions for disunity especially among the minority tribal group in the country (Enem, 2004). This is a barrier to national cohesion.

4. **Government Policies and Legislations** According to Jimoh (2006), government introduction of policies and legislation without planning, research and consultation of main stakeholders in the country sometimes lead to conflict and chaos. Policy changes too frequently without the citizenry internalizing the earlier such as the introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE), fluctuating petroleum prices and high school fees have been linked to the onset of many crises. Some ethnic affiliations may think that the government is initiating these polices to serve the interest of some other ethnic group or region (Jimoh, 2006).

**Management Roles to Students’ Behavioural Modification for Promoting National Cohesion**

Management is the utilization of physical and human resources through cooperative efforts and it is accomplished by performing the function of planning, organizing, staffing directing and controlling. Management in the context of this study refers to the top and middle level staff and officers of the University organization charged with the responsibility for decisive functions. The top level officers are responsible for determining the policies and objectives of the University community while the middle level staff executes the policies; they implement the policies and objectives as decided by the top management officers.

In the campuses, most students find it difficult to stay away from immorality, cultism and other vices that pose threats to national cohesiveness. They loss every sense of moral value and see nothing to suggest the need and importance of social harmony and unity (Daramola, 2006). This way of life cannot promote the spirit of oneness or national cohesion. Thus, it is very important for the management of the campuses to strictly enforce and vigorously implement the value systems stipulated in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2012). These include moral/spiritual values, dignity of human person, self-reliance and communal responsibility and dignity of labour.
amongst other. It is particularly tasks on tertiary institutions’ management to “develop and inculcate proper values” implying that, there are improper or negative values in students that should be nibbed in the bud. It therefore behooves the management of Nigeria tertiary institutions of learning to develop action plan on how acceptable social and national values are inculcated in the learners through the quality of educational instructions.

Often times, students indulge in vices against the school rules, and this may probably be because they do not feel a sense of belonging in the affairs of the school management, especially as it relate to their welfare. The university management can therefore employ school constitutional rules and regulations, the principles of good governance (patriotism, rule of law, participation of students and staff in decision making, human dignity, equity, social justice, inclusiveness, equality, human rights, non-discrimination, integrity, transparency, and accountability) to curb vices among students and promote national cohesiveness respectively. When students and staff feel the sense of belonging in the university system, the more they are likely to work with dignity, be patriotic to the management and display mutual respect for one another, which is a gateway for national cohesiveness.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of all the 690 students in the Department of Educational Administration and Planning of University of Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The sample size consisted of 360 students that were randomly selected among the students. A structured questionnaire titled: “Challenges and Management’s Role in Students’ Behavioural Modification” (CMRSBM) was used as the instrument for data collection, using four points rating scale in which scores were assigned to each response as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points; Agree (A) 3 points; Disagree (D) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point. Content validity was used. A pilot study was conducted at the University of Abuja using students who were not sampled for the study to test the reliability of the instrument. A total of 100 copies of the questionnaire were administered to randomly selected students, test-retest method of reliability was used to obtain the internal consistency. The reliability index was obtained through Cornbrash’s alpha (0.78). However, for the main study, all the 360 questionnaire forms administered were dully filled and returned, yielding 100% success rate. Data collected were statistically analyzed using the frequency tables and the mean score of 2.50 was taken as the bench mark for decision making. A mean score from 2.50 above depicted agreement to the questionnaire items, while a mean score less than 2.50 depicted disagreement to the questionnaire item. Discussion of findings was done immediately after data analysis.
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Respondents’ Views on Challenges Affecting the Achievement of National Cohesiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Response categories</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unhealthy relationship among various ethnic groups affect the achievement of national cohesiveness</td>
<td>SA (4) A (3) D (2) SD (1)</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Achievement of national cohesiveness is affected by fear of domination by some ethnic groups</td>
<td>60 63 199 38</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ethno-religious intolerance is a challenge to the achievement of national cohesiveness</td>
<td>88 115 96 61</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Favouritism on ethno-religious ground by some management staff of the University creates disunity among the ethnic diversities.</td>
<td>90 111 99 60</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Corruption among the strata of the society affect the achievement of national cohesiveness</td>
<td>121 83 56 100</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cumulative mean: 2.59, Accepted

Table one above shows the responses of the respondents on the challenges affecting the achievement of national cohesiveness in the country. From the table, it is clear that unhealthy relationship among various ethnic groups, ethno-religious intolerance, favoritism on ethno-religious ground by some management staff and corruption among the strata of the society, all affect the achievement of national cohesiveness negatively. The conclusion is drawn because the cumulative mean of 2.59 is greater than 2.49 the benchmark upon which decision is taken. These findings concur with Enem (2007) who asserts that ethnicity and cultural pluralism have been identified as twin catalysts in the amplification of rift and discontent in Nigeria. Also, Njoku (2004) agrees that the outbreak of ethno-religious conflicts has led to loss of many lives and property and displacement of thousands of people as well as intolerance and hatred. Eze (2003) confirms that corruption places some managers of our institutions above the law and encourages illegality. All these social menace are hindrance to achievement of national cohesiveness. Jimoh (2006) maintained that government introduction of policies and legislation within planning, research and consultation of the main stakeholders in the country lead to conflict and coos.
Table 2: Respondents’ Views on Management Roles to Students’ Behavioural Modification for Promoting National Cohesion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Response categories</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Good governance by the University management will modify students’ behaviour for national cohesion</td>
<td>80 128 113 39</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Leadership by example from the University management will modify students’ behaviour for national cohesion</td>
<td>82 96 127 55</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Equality treatment of member of the University community by the management will modify students’ behaviour for national cohesion</td>
<td>89 73 124 74</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Implementation of values systems in the school by the University management will modify students’ behaviour for national cohesion.</td>
<td>91 80 111 78</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ensuring participation of students and staff in decision making will modify students’ behaviour for national cohesion.</td>
<td>114 87 117 42</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table two above shows the responses of respondents on management roles to students’ behaviour modification for promoting national cohesion. The respondents believe generally that the University management play active role in modifying students’ behaviour for national cohesion. Reason being that their cumulative mean agreement level of 2.60 is higher than the 2.49. Specifically, most of the respondents believe that ensuring participation of students and staff in decision making; good governance and leadership by example from the University management will modify students’ behaviour for national cohesion. This finding is in consonance with the literatures of Olatunji, Adebayo, and Ajetunmobi (2007) that national values are beliefs of a nation guiding the actions and behaviour of its citizens. The authors added that the university management can apply rule of law, participation of students and staff in decision making, human dignity, equity, social justice, inclusiveness, equality, human rights, non-discrimination, integrity, transparency, and accountability to promote national cohesiveness. National Policy on Education (2012) emphasized on institutions for instance, the universities enforcing and implementing moral/spiritual values, self-reliance, communal responsibility, dignity of human person, labour and for the management of these institutions to develop action plan which will inculcate and promote social and national values, unity, togetherness and national cohesion.
CONCLUSIONS

One of the greatest challenges of various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria is the challenge of achievement of national cohesiveness. Unfortunately, in the tertiary institution of learning, instead of students from diverse background to integrate into a cohesive university community with a common sense of national identity and destiny, they are returning more and more to primordial affiliations for ethno-religion identity and loyalty. National cohesion is found to promote common vision and sense of belonging, peaceful co-existence among all members, appreciation and value for peoples’ diverse backgrounds and circumstances, similar life opportunities for those from different backgrounds, strong and positive relationships developed between people from different backgrounds. It was revealed that some members of the major ethnic groups have developed ethnocentrism that is, feeling that their culture is superior to others. This poses a problem in our attempt to build up a united Nigeria. However, conclusion can be drawn that management should endeavour to play key role in students’ behaviour modification for achievement of national cohesion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested to enhance national cohesiveness:

1. The University management should show leadership by example as students learn by example. Good example will modify students’ behaviour for national cohesion.

2. The University management should be fair in their relationship with every member of the school community. Equality treatment of member of the University community by the management will modify students' behaviour for national cohesion.

3. The University management should draw action plan for the implementation of value systems in the school that will modify students’ behaviour for national cohesion.

4. The University management should ensure participation of students and staff in decision making that affects students and staff. Active participation of students in decision making will give them sense of belonging and modify their behaviour for national cohesion.

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