

Basic Education as a Tool for Promoting National Integration among Children in Rural Basic Schools

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Abstract

This paper examines basic education as a tool for national integration among pupils of basic schools in rural areas of Oyo State, Nigeria. National disintegration of pupils in basic schools is one of the major reasons why the government of Nigeria launched universal basic education; its reasoning is that, once the foundation is established properly, the structure becomes solid. This study adopted a descriptive research design, which had as its purpose to characterise the population being studied. The sample of the research study consisted of 3 273 respondents (1 376 male, 1 897 female). Four research questions are raised and answered by this study. Data for the study was collected by means of a closed-ended questionnaire. The face and content validity of the study was ascertained and the reliability coefficient, using the Cronbach Alpha, was found to be 0.86. The findings of the research study showed that the elements of basic education that can bring about national integration among basic school children include the inculcation of sound moral behaviors, obedience to rules and regulations, respect for dignity of labour and democratic norms. The study also revealed that the inculcation of self-confidence in the pupils, a continuous search for knowledge, developing a sense of respect, and imbibing a spirit of national consciousness and patriotism are ways of promoting national integration. Based on the findings of the study, it recommended that subjects that could bring about integration should be emphasised more in the classroom by the teachers, to instil in the lives of the pupils a spirit of unity. Also, in order to promote integration of the pupils of basic schools, school heads and teachers should inculcate in the lives of the pupils a strong desire for knowledge and continued learning.

Key words: Basic education, Pupils, Rural areas, National integration, Oyo State

Introduction

Education is a very important sector in any country and without it, no meaningful development can occur. The importance of education is viewed by researchers, such as Johnson and Johnson (2006), Igbuzor (2011) and Fatile and Adejuwon (2011), as a means of fostering social justice, equality, peace and stability for the citizens of a country cannot be overemphasised. This is one of the reasons scholars, for example, Bello, Yusuf, Daramola and Obimuyiwa (2017), Ahmad and Ahmad (2014) and Singh (2014), regard education as an instrument for achieving rapid developmental progress in any nation. In line with this statement, Omodan and Tsotetsi (2019), and Jaiyeoba (2007) opine that education is a priority sector in every well-meaning society; education serves as a major force in economic, intellectual, social, political and cultural advancement.

Basic education is education that involves the transmission and inculcation of knowledge to learners at the foundational level. The place of basic education in the education system of a nation determines the level of its progress or development (Oyeleke, 2013). Basic education is the fulcrum upon which other levels of education rest and this is why the government of Nigeria has made basic education compulsory for all children of school-going age. Anaduaka and Okafor (2013) affirm that basic education is the foundation upon which other levels of education are built and a necessary requirement for human and national progress, national unity, as well as national cohesiveness among pupils. We can, therefore, deduce that the absence of basic education makes other levels of education an impossible mission.

The National Policy on Education (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013) affirms that basic education is the education given to children aged 0-15 years. It encompasses early childhood education (0-4 years) and 10 years of formal schooling. The basic education provided by the government of Nigeria shall be free, compulsory, universal and qualitative and lasts nine years: six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. The policy document of the Federal Government of Nigeria (2013:4) states that the specific objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme include:

- (a) Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- (b) The provision of free, compulsory, UBE for every Nigerian child of school age;
- (c) Reducing drastically the incidence of dropout from the formal school system;
- (d) Catering for the learning needs of young persons who, for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education; and
- (e) Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, manipulative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying the foundation for lifelong learning).

It is a known, incontestable fact that education is a major tool for enlightenment. Education enables recipients to function well and contributes its quota to the development of communities. One of the major goals of education in any nation is preparing its citizens for responsible and productive adult lives, so that they can function honestly, efficiently and effectively in the society

in which they live. According to the Nigerian National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013), education

- (a) Develops individuals into morally sound, patriotic and effective citizens;
- (b) Integrates individuals fully into their immediate communities, Nigerian society and the world, as a global village;
- (c) Inculcates a national consciousness, values and national unity; and
- (d) Develops appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities/competencies and empowers the individuals to live in and contribute positively to society.

Based on the information contained in the policy statement, the total integration of the Nigerian child should be seen as foundational and should be achieved early in the formative stage of learning.

Several terms are attributed to national integration. National integration is a relative term because there is no standard yardstick for measuring it. Bandyopadhyay and Green (2008) and Ojo (2009) equate the term with national cohesion, national unity, nation-building and togetherness. The issue of national integration cuts across every sphere of human life and, thus, touches the national life as well. As a result of this phenomenon, no meaningful development can take place in the absence of unity and togetherness. Birch (2012) and Alapiki (2005) describe national integration as the unity of purpose and a sense of direction, a feeling of cohesion; a feeling of harmony; a feeling of loyalty to the country; a feeling of patriotism and a feeling of tolerance among the members of a country. On a larger scale, national integration is the process of creating and inculcating a unifying spirit, and a can-do attitude among the people of a society or country, that exists through harmonious coexistence. In Nigerian basic schools, it is the inculcation of a spirit of oneness, togetherness and esprit-de-corps among pupils to encourage them to develop a spirit of tolerance and a strong sense of patriotism that will promote the development of the nation at large.

Education in rural areas is of significant concerns to stakeholders. Many are of the view that rural education is not as productive as that of schooling in urban areas. Monk (2007, in Owusu-Acheampong & Williams, 2015) relates rural areas with economic trust in agriculture. Monk defines rural schools as those located in remote areas with small and sparse populations (less than 2 500 dwellers), and that are primarily reliant on agriculture. Adelabu (2008) reveals that citizens observe that, in Nigeria, schooling in rural areas of the country often has little to offer and, as a

result, produces unemployable and unemployed citizens with few marketable skills. Nigeria is a profoundly diverse country and her cultures embrace language, dress, food, religion and culture. Pupils who are in basic schools in rural areas of Oyo State face diversities in the areas of language, ethnicity, culture, traditions, beliefs and religion. Basic education, by its nature, is an all-inclusive form of education for learners of all classes, who have been brought together and interact under the same conditions. As a result, misunderstandings and clashes of opinions often occur among pupils in basic education schools and raises questions about national disintegration. The diverse needs of learners in basic schools may pose a challenge to the realisation of national integration among the children in basic schools.

Statement of the problem

The issue of basic education in Nigeria has been a topic of national discourse since it was launched in 1999 by Olusegun Obasanjo, then Nigeria's president. The government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria thought that UBE would help solve the myriad of problems confronting the country at the foundation level. Both the government and experts, such Famade (2014) and Ankomah, Koomson, Bosu and Oduro (2005), are of the view that basic education should be the foundation or springboard upon which national unity, progress, cohesion and integration, among others, could be actualised.

Research by Haruna and Liman (2006), Jaiyeoba (2009) and Ofejebe (2014), on different aspects of UBE in Nigeria, has produced inconclusive findings; not all have been empirical in nature, some were carried out outside Oyo State, Nigeria, and not all focused on pupils in rural areas. The researchers observe that there is a dearth of research in relation to how UBE can be used to bring about national integration. The government of Nigeria established UBE as a springboard to realise national integration of pupils of school-going age. It is the view of the researchers that the Federal Republic of Nigeria's objectives for establishing UBE have not been achieved, and the programme has not yielded the desired outcomes. The problems of ethnicity, favouritism, sentiments and discrimination as a result of diversity in the areas of language, religion, and ethnicity, to mention a few factors, among pupils at the basic education level have hampered the achievement of national integration at this level. This study was, therefore, carried out to examine basic education as a tool for achieving national integration of pupils of basic schools in rural areas of Oyo State, Nigeria.

Research questions

In line with the objectives of this study, the following research questions were raised:

- (a) What are the aspects of basic education that can help achieve integration of pupils at basic schools in rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria?
- (b) How does basic education promote the integration of pupils at basic schools in rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria?
- (c) What are the challenges militating against basic education as a tool for integration of children at basic schools in rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria?
- (d) What are the solutions to the challenges facing basic education in rural areas of Oyo State, Nigeria?

Review of related literature

Heyneman (2000), in his work entitled, *From the party/state to multi-ethnic democracy: Education and social cohesion in Europe and Central Asia*, argues that public education has been one of the main contributors to social cohesion in the West; but that countries of Europe and central Asia are finding it difficult to replicate the Western education experience. In fact, when compared to other parts of the world, the school system of the United States seems to perform rather well with respect to its social cohesion functions. Durie (2009) conducted a study on social cohesion in relation to the indigenisation of higher education in New Zealand and concluded that universities have the potential to demonstrate social cohesion and also to prepare graduates for leadership roles that promote a society that can model inclusiveness without demanding assimilation.

Jamil and Raman (2012) conducted a study entitled, *Malaysian educational policy for national integration: Contested terrain of multiple aspirations in a multicultural nation*. The study employed a quasi-historical and a qualitative research approach. The interview data gathered shows that Malaysian plural society remains in a contested landscape regarding ideology and aspirations to build a united and harmonious Malaysian nation. In similar exploration, Kataka (2014) investigated the quota system of education and its implication for national unity and found that factors, such as teacher employment, student selection processes and poverty, limit student/teacher interaction with other cultures and exposure to different environments, which gives rise to closed societies, closed cultures and teachers who are not globally exposed. This situation gives rise to closed individuals, who might end up not being fully acculturated into different environments and lacking the skills necessary to foster integration in society.

Domike and Arikpo (2015) examined the role of the integration of primary education in achieving cultural and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. The study used a descriptive survey design and found that, if primary education programmes are well channelled into national integration, it could enhance peace among citizens. In the same perspective, Okonkwo and Amaka (2013) conducted a study in Anambra on the roles of counsellors in the UBE programme. The study revealed factors that must be approached and proposed roles for the counsellors to achieve effective implementation of UBE. A study that examined integrating peace education into the Nigerian basic education curriculum to achieve a lasting culture of peace and environmental sustainability was conducted by Ofojebe (2014). Findings of the study reveal that aspects of peace education, such as approachable means to conflict resolution, reconciliation, negotiation and tolerance, should be integrated into basic education. Furthermore, effective planning with adequate consultation and involvement of stakeholders should be adopted for effective integration of peace education into Nigerian basic education.

A study by Adelabu (2008), entitled, *Making education services work for rural population: A case study of Egbedore Local Government of Osun State, Nigeria*, reveals the considerable influence of education on the high incidence of poverty in rural areas. Poverty is a form of marginalisation of rural areas, through urban-based development policies and distribution of values. In support of the same view, Evans-Obinna and Ndieze (2017) carried out a study that examined free education for sustainable national development – an aspect of national integration in Nigeria. A relationship between free education and sustainable development was established. The extent of enhancement and factors that facilitate free education were also examined and suggestions include the need to ensure equity and egalitarianism, combat looming poverty, address low manpower/literacy levels, provide scholarships and bursaries to students and government providing adequate funding.

A theoretical view of national integration

Assimilation is a straight procedure over time, through which one group is equated to another on a cultural level. By accepting this hypothesis as a focal point, it becomes clear how generational changes take place in immigrant families, whereby the immigrant generation is culturally extraordinary upon entry, but, over time, is absorbed into the overwhelming society. The original offspring of immigrants grow up and are socialised into a general public that is not quite the same as that of their original culture. The dominant culture will be the local culture, however,

new entrants may continue to hold fast to a few qualities and practices of their native culture, usually at home and inside their locale, particularly if that network is dominated by a homogenous immigrant group. The second generation of immigrants is more averse to retaining parts of their grandparents' way of life and dialect, and is likely to be socially indistinguishable from the greater culture. This is the type of assimilation that can be portrayed as "Americanisation" in the United States. Assimilation is a hypothesis of the way migrants are "ingested" into a "so-called melting pot society" (Arppe, 2016).

Park and Burgess (1921) were the first to study the term integration through the idea of assimilation. These scholars characterised integration as a procedure of interpenetration and combination in which people and gatherings gain the recollections, estimations, and frame of mind of different people and gatherings and, by sharing their experience and history, are joined with them in a typical social life. However, Beresneviciūtė (2003) asserts that most contemporary researchers and scholars regard integration as a social issue instead of an administrative, bureaucratic, or legal one.

There is another theory that concerns national cohesion, which is called the theory of social integration. No doubt, the term integration first came into use in work of Émile Durkheim, a French sociologist. Durkheim needed to comprehend why rates of suicide were greater in some social classes than others. Durkheim believed that society exerted an incredible influence on people. He reasoned that a people's convictions, values and norms make up aggregate cognisance, and a mutual method for seeing one another and the world (Arppe, 2016). According to Beresneviciūtė (2003) the idea of national integration is a crucial one in functionalist theories, and it characterises a method of relations of the units of a system by ideals, which, on the one hand, refrain from upsetting the framework, and, then again, they coordinate to advance its working as a unit.

All these theories are applicable, particularly in the rural context, which is my area of concern. Fusing on cultural values, standards or norms should not be a difficult task, especially in this kind of setting, considering the theory postulated by Durkheim on social integration, and in line with the theory of cultural assimilation. Theories are comprehensive tools that summarise the concept of national cohesion. According to Durkheim, one of the significant components of integration is the degree to which different individuals communicate with each other. Education as an indispensable key helps to achieve this purpose of social integration through classroom interactions and other collective learning experiences.

Methodology

Research design and Study area

The research design employed by this research study was a quantitative descriptive design; it studied current basic education as a tool for national integration of children at basic schools in rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria. A survey, in the form of a questionnaire, was developed by the researcher to collect data. Best and Khan (1998) and Adler and Clark (2011) explain that a survey deals with variables that cannot be manipulated by the researchers because they have already occurred. The area of study was Oyo State, Nigeria, which was formed in 1976. It is an inland state in south-western Nigeria and its capital is Ibadan. It is bounded in the north by Kwara State, in the east by Osun State, in the south by Ogun State and in the west partly by Ogun State and partly by the Republic of Benin. It covers an area of approximately 28 454 square kilometres and is ranked 14th by size among Nigeria's states. Oyo State is homogenous, inhabited mainly by the Yoruba ethnic group who are primarily agrarian but have a predilection for living in high-density urban centers. The indigenes mainly comprise Oyos, Oke-Oguns, Ibadans and Ibarapas, whom all belong to the Yoruba family and live in indigenous cities in Africa. Ibadan has been the centre of administration of the former Western Region, Nigeria, since the days of British colonial rule. Presently the state has 2 371 basic schools. The state was chosen for this study was because it is a rural area.

Population, Sample and sampling techniques

The population of the study consisted of the 17 694 basic education heads and teachers of Oyo State, Nigeria. Preliminary investigation of the researcher showed that the population of school heads and all the teachers at government-owned basic education schools in Oyo State, Nigeria, numbered 2 371 and 15 323 respectively. A stratified sampling technique was used to select school heads and teachers of basic schools in the Oyo State of Nigeria. Stratified random sampling, as the name infers, includes ordering test components into strata and then choosing the components from every stratum by means of random sampling procedures (Bambale, 2014). The basic schools in Oyo State were first stratified on the basis of location, i.e., urban or rural. Since the study focused only on basic schools in rural areas, the sample used for the study was drawn from those schools. Thereafter, stratified sampling was used to select basic school heads and teachers on the basis of gender, i.e., male or female. In all, a total of 273 school heads, comprising 131 men and 142 women, participated in the study. Furthermore, a total of 3 000 basic school

teachers, comprising 1 245 men and 1 755 women, were sampled for this study. Altogether, 3 273 respondents participated in this study.

Research instrument and Procedure for data collection

An instrument called the basic education for national integration questionnaire (BEFNIQ) was developed by the researchers to collect data for this study. It was structured on a four-point Likert scale of strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. The face and content validity of the instrument was determined by three lecturers of the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, and a pilot test was conducted to ascertain the reliability coefficient of the instrument. Cronbach's Alpha was used, and the questionnaire was administered to 50 basic schools that were not among the schools in Oyo State selected for this study. The coefficient value obtained for the reliability is 0.86. The researchers, together with two trained research assistants, administered all 3 273 questionnaires, and 2 756, representing 84.20%, were duly retrieved from the respondents and subjected to data analysis. The data collected from the respondents was analysed using the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. Any mean score that was above 2.50 was regarded as "Agreed" while a mean score lower than 2.50 was regarded as "Disagreed".

Ethics statement

It is important to mention that the researchers respected the responses of the respondents and ensured that they were treated with the most confidentiality. In the course of administering the instruments, respondents were not forced or enticed by financial gains or predetermined results to engage in the activities. This research work is independent and impartial in every aspect. Since the respondents were not forced to participate in the study, the study had ethical clearance.

Results and Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What are the aspects of basic education that can help achieve integration among children of basic schools in rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Aspects of basic education that can help achieve national integration

Aspects of basic education that can help achieve national integration		SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	inculcation of sound moral behaviour in the children	789	953	548	466	2.80	.61	A
2	developing positive attitude to managing resources in the children	532	427	942	855	2.20	.41	D
3	teaching the children to obey rules and regulations of the school	988	895	621	252	3.11	.75	A

4	training the children to obey constituted authority	1056	1423	143	132	2.60	.80	A
5	inculcation of respect for the worth and dignity of individuals among the children	864	955	542	395	2.51	.53	A
6	teaching of faith in man's ability to make rational decisions	972	941	520	323	2.51	.72	A
7	teaching of spiritual values in interpersonal relations	644	286	562	1264	2.45	.66	D
8	respect for the dignity of labour	1053	885	564	254	3.00	.88	A
9	encouragement in the lives of the children the principles of shared responsibility for the common good of society	1235	856	421	244	3.41	.76	A
10	establish social systems and norms that are democratic	1347	942	255	212	3.54	.76	A

Source: Fieldwork

Table 1 shows that, apart from Items 2 and 7, with mean scores of 2.20 and 2.45, which fall below the acceptable mean of 2.50, all the other items were found to be above the acceptable mean of 2.50, thus, indicating that the respondents agreed that some aspects of basic education as taught in basic schools of rural areas in Oyo State can help achieve national integration of pupils.

Research Question 2: How can basic education promote national integration among the children of basic schools in rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Table 2: How does basic education promote integration of pupils in basic schools?

Basic education promotes national integration through		SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	inculcation of self-confidence in the children	962	984	511	299	2.80	.61	A
2	desire for knowledge and continued learning	1322	952	216	266	2.90	.65	A
3	sense of respect for and tolerance of the opinion of others	922	1023	561	250	3.11	.58	A
4	social attitude and values such as cooperation, participation	1076	956	548	176	2.66	.70	A
5	honesty, open-mindedness, integrity, diligence and obedience	989	952	552	263	2.77	.66	A
6	teaching the children to imbibe the spirit of national consciousness and patriotism	1109	841	473	333	2.51	.70	A
7	equipping the children with the basic understanding of the knowledge of the total environment.	975	979	504	298	2.60	.58	A
8	teaching the children to be resourceful	892	1210	422	232	2.70	.88	A
9	encouragement of extra curricula activities in the primary schools help the children to be united	975	851	498	432	2.76	.66	A

10	exposure of pupils to inter-ethnic activities like drama and music can promote peaceful coexistence.	852	951	563	390	3.00	.89	A
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Source: Fieldwork

Table 2 shows that the mean scores of all the items are above the acceptable mean of 2.50, thus, indicating that the respondents agreed that some aspects of basic education as taught in basic schools in rural areas of Oyo State can help to achieve the aim of national integration of the pupils.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges militating against basic education as a tool for national integration of pupils of basic schools in rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Challenges militating against basic education as a tool for national integration

Challenges of basic education as a tool for national integration		SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	inadequate provision of facilities for UBE children	692	562	758	744	2.11	.92	D
2	inadequate and improper supervision of children by teachers	673	611	795	677	2.33	.81	D
3	low moral values of the society where the children come from	989	953	462	352	3.66	.52	A
4	high level of indiscipline among the teachers and students	952	1059	442	303	2.66	.70	A
5	lack of proper guidance and counseling of the children	892	965	423	476	2.77	.66	A
6	lack of dedication and commitment on the part of the teachers to instill in the children the right values	665	652	721	728	2.01	.88	D
7	non teaching of spiritual values in interpersonal relations	695	620	810	631	2.25	.90	D
8	lack of respect for the dignity of labour	789	961	524	437	3.65	.57	A
9	differential distribution and provision of facilities for UBE children	895	901	480	480	2.76	.66	A
10	improper monitoring of children by teachers	975	979	504	298	3.70	.87	A

Source: Fieldwork

Table 3 clearly indicates that the respondents disagreed that Items 1, 2, 6 and 7 presented challenges, because the mean scores of these four items are below the acceptable mean of 2.50. Item 1 has a mean score of 2.11, Item 2 a mean score of 2.33, Item 6 a mean score of 2.01 and Item 7 has a mean score of 2.25, which are all below the accepted mean values. All the other items relating to challenges were agreed to by the respondents, because their mean scores of Items 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10 were all above the acceptable mean score of 2.50, which includes low moral values

of the society where the pupils come from; a high level of indiscipline among the teachers and students; lack of proper guidance and counseling of the pupils; lack of respect for the dignity of labour; differential distribution and provision of facilities for UBE pupils; and improper monitoring of pupils by teachers.

Research Question 4: What are the solutions to the challenges against basic education as a tool for national integration among children of basic schools rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Solutions to the challenges against basic education as a tool for national integration

Solutions to the challenges of basic education as a tool for national integration		SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	adequate distribution and provision of facilities for UBE children	692	562	758	744	2.11	.92	D
2	adequate and proper supervision of children by teachers	673	611	795	677	2.33	.81	D
3	inculcation of sound moral values of the society where the children come from	989	953	462	352	3.66	.52	A
4	high level of discipline among the teachers and students should be encouraged	952	1059	442	303	2.66	.70	A
5	proper guidance and counselling of the children	892	965	423	476	2.77	.66	A
6	promoting the spirit of dedication and commitment on the part of the teachers to instil in the children the right values	665	652	721	728	2.01	.88	D
7	teaching of spiritual values in interpersonal relations	695	620	810	631	2.25	.90	D
8	establishment of social systems and norms that are democratic by the schools	789	961	524	437	3.65	.57	A
9	teaching of right values	895	901	480	480	2.76	.66	A
10	teaching the children on how to be tolerant of others in their daily lives.	975	979	504	298	3.70	.87	A

Source: Fieldwork

Table 4 reveals that all the mean scores of all the items are above the acceptable mean of 2.50, thus, indicating that the respondents agreed that all the items present possible solutions for the challenges facing basic education as tools for national integration of pupils in basic schools in rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Discussion of findings

In response to Research Question 1 of this study, it was found that, for basic education to serve as a tool to achieve national integration of pupils in basic schools in rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria, schools should inculcate in the pupils sound moral behaviours, obedience to rules and regulations, respect for the dignity of labour, and democratic norms, among other values. This

finding conforms with the theory of social integration, theory of cultural assimilation and earlier findings of Ofojebe (2014), namely, that aspects of peace education, such as approachable means to conflict resolution, reconciliation, negotiation and tolerance, should be integrated into basic education, as these values are necessary for building a multicultural nation, such as Nigeria.

In relation to Research Question 2, it was found that basic education can help to promote national integration among the pupils of basic schools in rural areas of Oyo State, Nigeria, through inculcating self-confidence in the pupils, promoting a continuous search for knowledge, developing sense of respect, imbibing the spirit of national consciousness and patriotism, among other values, in the lives of basic school pupils. This finding agrees with that of Domike and Arikpo (2015), who found that, if a basic education programme is well channelled in national development, it could enhance peace and promote cultural unity among citizens. Furthermore, this finding is also in agreement with the theory of assimilation, which is a theory on how one group, over time, turns out to be culturally like another. The finding of this study disagrees with Kataka (2014), who found that many factors could give rise to a closed individual who might end up being not fully acculturated into different environments and lacking the necessary skills to foster harmony in society.

It was found in relation to Research Question 3 that inadequate provision of facilities for UBE children, inadequate supervision of children, lack of dedication and commitment by teachers and a failure to teach spiritual values do not present challenges to basic education for national integration at basic schools in Oyo State, Nigeria. Challenges that were reported among pupils in rural basic schools in Oyo State include low moral values of the society where the pupils come from; high levels of indiscipline among the teachers and students; lack of proper guidance and counselling of the pupils; lack of respect for the dignity of labour; differential distribution and provision of facilities for UBE pupils; and improper monitoring of pupils by teachers.

It was found in relation to Research Question 4 that, for national integration to occur for basic school pupils, there should be, among others, distribution and provision of adequate facilities, adequate and proper supervision of pupils by teachers, inculcation of sound moral values of the society, and proper guidance and counselling of the pupils. The finding is compatible with earlier studies by Okonkwo and Amaka (2013), Ofojebe (2014) and Evans-Obinna and Ndieze (2017), who found that basic education and sustainable development had been established. It also corresponds with findings of Domike and Arikpo (2015), that, if basic education programmes are well channelled into national development, it could enhance peace and promote cultural unity among citizens.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study examined basic education as a tool for promoting national integration of the pupils of basic schools in rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria. Based on the findings that emanated from this study, the Federal Government of Nigeria's goal by introducing UBE was achieving national integration. The study concludes that, for meaningful national integration to take place in Nigeria, basic education is a sine qua non.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- (a) Subjects that could bring about integration should receive greater emphasis in the classroom from teachers, so as to instil in the lives of children the spirit of unity.
- (b) In order to promote integration of the pupils of basic schools, school heads and teachers should inculcate in the lives of the pupils a strong desire for knowledge and continuous learning, because it serves as a basis for national integration.
- (c) Since education is a key factor in bringing about national integration, teachers should show greater dedication towards their work, by ensuring that adequate guidance is given to basic school pupils. Doing so will ensure that pupils exert a positive influence on each other, and turn the classroom into a reshaping and restructuring laboratory, where pupils realise the power of national integration. This is a perfect solution to the challenges of improper monitoring of pupils by teachers, as reported by the study.
- (d) All the solutions proposed in response to Research Question 4 should be utilised. These solutions include adequate distribution and provision of facilities for UBE pupils, adequate and proper supervision of pupils, adequate and proper supervision of pupils by teachers, inculcation of sound moral values of the society where the pupils come from, establishing high levels of discipline among the teachers and students, teaching the right values, teaching pupils how to be tolerant of others in their daily lives, establishing social systems and norms that are democratic, providing proper guidance and counselling of the children, promoting the spirit of dedication and commitment on the part of the teachers to instil in the children the right values, and teaching spiritual values in interpersonal relations by teachers by the school heads and teachers, in order to foster national integration among basic school pupils.
- (e) All basic schools should engage the services of qualified counsellors, as the importance of their role in basic education cannot be overemphasised. The role of counselling and guidance is to advance equality and learners' wellbeing, and to prevent social exclusion. Counsellors are also needed to help pupils solve personal, social and academic problems.

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