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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EDUCATION AND NIGERIA'S QUEST FOR NATION-BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Manuscript Info	*Abstract*
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	This paper examined education and Nigeria's quest for nation-building and development. The study highlighted that access to quality education is a great virtue of nation-building and development. It is assumed that nation-building and development are made possible through education. It is widely believed that education places a significant premium on thinking critically and ethically to contribute to national development and nation-building capability. The paper further identifies and places importance on the problems of nation-building and development in Nigeria and the better ways to change the narrative that hinders nation-building. The paper also explores, by way of explanation, how education could be used to serve as a pathway to nation-building. The methodology adopted was a contextual analysis that involved the review of materials from different publications, textbooks, and other relevant internet/online sources that were descriptively presented. The paper concluded that since education is regarded as a pathway to nation-building and development, governments at all levels should strive to work out and be committed to meeting the UNESCO International Benchmark on 20% annual budget for education from member nations, especially among 3rd World countries to be able to drive the vehicle of nation building and development to a promised land.

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Introduction:-

Nigeria, as a nation, got its independence in 1960 and became a republic in 1963; all these were celebrated with fanfare. Ever since, various governments have been trying to build a virile and stable nationhood. However, Nation-building, which officially started in Nigeria in 1900 when Britain took over the direct administration of Nigeria, has not been able to produce the necessary cohesion expected of any modern state because specific basic necessities of life such as food, cloth, shelter, health, and efficient transport system are yet to be put in place in different communities by the leaders. In line with this, a nation that started with three (3) regions at independence in 1960 metamorphosed into twelve (12) states in 1967. The agitation for state creation continued, and in 1976, an additional seven (7) states were created to make nineteen (19) states. By 1987, two (2) more states were created, and the same military administration created nine (9) states. The last sets of six (6) states were created in 1996, making the total number of states in Nigeria thirty-six (36), with the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) as the nation's capital. This is better explained and summarised in the table below:

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Table 1:- States Created in Nigeria between 1967-1996.

General Yakubu Gowon. 27th May, 1967	General Murtala Muhammed. 3rd February, 1976	General Ibrahim B. Babangida. 23rd September, 1987	General Ibrahim B. Babangida. 27th August, 1991	General Sani Abacha. 1st October, 1996.
North/Western	Anambra State	Akwa Ibom State	Abia State	Bayelsa State
North/Eastern	Bauchi State	Katsina State	Delta State	Ebonyi State
North Central	Benue State		Enugu State	Ekiti State
Benue-Plateau	Imo State		Jigawa State	Gombe State
Kwara State	Niger State		Kebbi State	Nasarawa State
Western State	Ogun State		Kogi State	Zamfara State
Lagos State	Ondo State		Osun State	
Mid-Western State	Borno State		Taraba State	
East Central State	Gongola State		Yobe State	
Rivers State	Oyo State			
South Eastern State	Plateau State			
Kano State	Sokoto State			
	FCT (Abuja)			

Source: Ota et'al (2020).

The essence of state creation is assumed to bring development to the grassroots, for the minorities to have a sense of belonging, and lastly, to seek the expansion of the scope and platform for the citizens to express themselves and utilise their potential to bring about nation building and national development at large. Nigeria is a nation with multi-ethnic groups that run into over 250 ethnic groups/tribes; this notwithstanding, the nation's goal is not to allow the nation's diversities to be a clog into the wheel of nation-building and sustainable development. In other words, the nation's diversity should be the strength in moving the nation to an enviable position (Adesina, 2021). However, when diversity is mismanaged, it becomes divergent rather than united for a strong nation. The people are splintered with each entity, believing that sometimes, it becomes challenging, if not impossible, to talk about nation-building.

Education teaches about the value of perseverance and aids in the personal growth of individuals. Anchor (2015) posited that building a better future for all people in a nation begins with education, which fosters peace in society. Education contributes to developing morals, values, and skills so that the nation's citizens become well-rounded, tolerant adults prepared to alter the course of the world for the better. Building healthy and resilient communities can be accomplished with education, which is a potent tool if well harnessed. Education is considered a purposeful venture, as it has its objectives and goals. These goals of education, as simply stated, are what education is expected to achieve. Usually, these educational goals are stated regarding national goals. The National Policy on Education (NPE-FGN, 2014) has spelt out the goals and objectives of Nigeria's education thus:
1. The inculcation of national consciousness and unity
2. The inculcation of the correct type of values and attitudes for the survival of Nigerian society.
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around
4. The acquisition of appropriate skills, ability and competence, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of society.

For these goals to be established, institutions such as education and political institutions are involved, and in line with the stated educational goal and objectives, Osalusi (2010) asserted that Social Studies as a school subject/an educational discipline helps every member of society develop the ability to adapt to their ever-changing environments and produce citizens who are well disciplined, loyal, obedient, honest, hardworking, dedicated, committed and painstaking. Through Social Studies Education/discipline, Nigeria hopes to:
1. Develop a capacity to learn and acquire basic skills, including listening, reading, speaking, working and calculation, together with observation, analysis and inferences, which are essential to forming sound judgement.
2. Ensure the acquisition of the relevant body of knowledge and information, which is an essential prerequisite to personal development and making a positive contribution to the betterment of society.

3. Create an awareness and understanding of our physical environment and the evolving social and cultural processes.
4. Develop the ability to utilise our cultural, spiritual, and natural resources and conserve them for national development.
5. Appreciate the diversity and inter-independence of all members of the local and national communities and the need for cooperation for the unity of the country and international understanding.
6. Inculcate positive values and appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness, justice and togetherness for the development of the nation (FGN, 2014)

From the aforementioned, they are all essential in making citizens capable of contributing to building a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy and a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens. The above virtues further emphasise that the subjects we do in school are ones considered relevant to our society and should be able to materialise the educational goals in our nation and promote nation-building and development, which align with Nigeria's national goals and aspirations.

Nation-building is considered as establishing a national identity to transcend ethnic, regional and any other particularistic ties, promoting national integration through political participation, economic exchange and cultural interaction by all population segments and developing a national culture through education and cultural activities (Adesina, 2021). This implies that building a nation is a collective responsibility that cuts across all strata of society without cultural or political barriers (Erinmosho, 2012 & Gambari, 2018). However, in the case of Nigeria, which recently marked her 63rd year of political independence and 60th year of becoming a Republic, the nation is still very far behind in the quest to build a virile, strong and united nation. This still manifested in her political circle, especially in the 2023 general election, especially the presidential election, where campaigns and voting were spread on ethnic colouration and sometimes on religious affiliations. Various governments at all levels have tried in the past to build a virile nation. However, many such attempts and efforts were confronted with various degrees of hindrances in the areas of politics, economics, socio-cultural and religious crises coupled with the terrorist activities of the Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen, Kidnapping for ransom and armed banditry. All these have undermined and frustrated the efforts of the leaders and followers at nation-building and dramatically threatened the very corporate entity, unity, and interactions of the people of Nigeria as a whole. It has been observed that apart from the problems mentioned above confronting nation-building in Nigeria, there are other salient problems confronting nation-building, among which are problems of indiscipline, lack of patriotism, corruption, lack of political will, unemployment, transparent discrimination, the problem of ethnic loyalty which has continued to colour the political landscape of Nigeria ever since independence.

Nigeria is blessed with both human and material resources to the extent that she has been exporting experts in significant numbers in various climes to other nations of the world, and they have been performing excellently well because of a conducive environment where facilities are available for them to practice in their maximum capacity. Other nations also gained independence in the same period as Nigeria, which had joined the League of Developed Nations. However, Nigeria still seems to be struggling and confronted many problems militating against her nationhood. With this, it is impossible to say that Nigeria lacks the right resources to build a virile, robust, stable and united nation. Therefore, something appears wrong somewhere, which does not allow for a strong nation. Hence, this paper focuses on how education could effectively be utilised to build a stable and united nation and bring about development in all spheres.

Literature Review:-
Education and Nation Building
Education is usually the acquiring knowledge and skills accepted by a given society. The essence of education is capable of correcting people's behaviours and attitudes that seem to imbalance people's dispositions. Education is not limited to the ability to read and write alone but includes the ability to become a functional and productive member of society. Akinteye and Folarin (2016) opined that education balances the growth of an individual's total personality by training his spirit, intellect and feeling, which is considered a vital instrument for growth and desired progress for men and women. By implication, they would be able to contribute positively to nation-building and sustainable development.

Nigeria, as a developing nation, believes in the importance of education in achieving laudable goals, culminated in her commitment to educational provision as expressed in the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education (FGN, 2014) that education is an instrument "per excellence" for effective national development. This kind of education will provide the knowledge and skills required for individuals to contribute to nation-building and have a cheerful attitudinal disposition to call for nation-building and sustainable development. In recognition of this, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FGN, 2014), in her national policy on education, as earlier enumerated in this study, spelt out very clearly that for the benefit of its citizens, the country's educational goals shall be relevant to the needs of the individual and those of the society in consonance with the realities of the nation and the modern world. For a developing country like Nigeria, there is a need to realise how education can bring about nation-building. When illiteracy is eradicated, citizens become enlightened, resulting in the actions expected of good citizens. Notably, the country will be in better shape once the citizens live right. Also, an educated person, who is transformed, may not be found in the act of robbery, murder, kidnapping, rape, and other vices, thus making the nation a place of peace and comfort where nation-building and economic development thrive (Lochner and Moretti, in Ogbonnaya, 2020). The essence of education in any nation, as reflected in the work of Osalusi (2010), is that through education, citizens of a given nation who have acquired the required knowledge develop the required skills and manifest desirable attitudes that are necessary for them to be able to live comfortably and also contribute their quota to nation building and bring about sustainable development.

Nation-building could be viewed as a concerted effort aimed at bringing people or people together for the sole purpose of achieving common objectives. As Olusanya (2020) put it, nation-building involves the psychological reconstruction of individuals, infusing into the people of new independent territories who differ widely on language, religion, values and interests with a new sense of common belonging and shared identity as reflected in Nigeria. Generally, we love to quote the saying, "Rome was not built in a day", but we fail to remember that Rome was eventually built, and it must have been so magnificent that when people admired it, they were told that it did not happen in just a day. The question then is, if Rome was not built in a day, how was it built? The correct answer to the above question is that Rome was built daily (Anonymous). This implies that to build a virile, strong, self-reliant nation that all would be proud of, all hands must be on deck, and it must be an everyday exercise which should not be left in the hands of a few but a joint effort of all and sundry.

Hindrances to Nation-building in Nigeria
Nigeria as a nation is faced with numerous problems which have contributed negatively to the issue of nation-building; some of these problems have earlier been stated but will now be enunciated more for more precise understanding:
1. The problem of the amalgamation of 1914, where the Southern and Northern Protectorates were merged without consideration of the cultural diversities and any input from the people, is still hurting the country (Ikenna & Adaeze, 2022). The historical legacies of colonial rule create some challenges for nation-building in Nigeria. Colonial rule divided Nigeria into North and South with different land tenure systems, local government administration, educational systems, and judicial systems, except for transportation and currency that joined the two protectorates. The dual administrative system affected Nigerians by not seeing themselves as one, and it further engendered the spirit of nation-building even after independence in 1960. Many members of the Nigerian elite class in the 1950s and 1960s had their education and world outlook modelled by the regional institutions. Under these conditions, it was easy for prejudice and fear to thrive and to kill the spirit of nation-building, but what of now?
2. Another major problem challenging nation-building in Nigeria is the problem of ethnic loyalty, which has continued to colour the political landscape of the country since independence until recently when people started advocating for the formation of political parties that must be national in outlook rather than being sectional or only being popular in a section of the country.
3. Nigerians do not see themselves as one because of ethnic differences, religious dichotomy, and wrong perception about who owns the land (Nigeria). Some groups in the country perceived that they owned the land and that it was their birthright to rule the nation indefinitely.
4. A significant problem that seems to have contributed immensely and terribly to nation-building in Nigeria is what has generally been perceived as 'transparent discrimination practices' in employment matters in the country. A country where the citizens are being discriminated against by their state of origin, which is a factor in being employed, will indeed impede nation-building, mainly where applicants can only be recruited into government ministries and MDAs on contract bases as against given permanent employment because they are not from such states. Although many reasons are adduced for this, notwithstanding, the Federal Character

Commission is now given the responsibility of recruiting individuals into Federal ministries and Parastatals based on a quota system, which also determines the number of slots each state gets from the available vacancies without consideration to the level of unemployment in each state.

5. Problem of indiscipline, lack of patriotism, corruption, and political will. The level of indiscipline among the leaders and the followers in a country like Nigeria has contributed to the menace of corruption in the country, which has also made the country referred to as the capital city of poverty in the world. Ikenna and Adaeze (2022) observed that a careful analysis of past regimes in Nigeria revealed that leadership and corruption are positively correlated. The argument is that virtually all political and military leaders came to power to enrich themselves and their cronies rather than offering selfless services to the nation and its people. The World Bank Study of Sub-Saharan Africa, cited in Ikenna & Adaeze (2022), observed that the problem of Africa's development and nation-building is a governance crisis. This is reaffirmed by the current situation in the country, which points out that because of the countervailing power that has been lacking, state officials in many countries (including Nigeria) have served their interests without fear of being called to account. Politics becomes personalised, and patronage becomes essential to maintain power. In such a country, it is evident that nation-building will remain unachievable/unattainable.

Since education has been said to be the pathway to nation-building enterprise, education therefore provides the following to promote nation-building:

Education is critical in addressing societal challenges such as poverty, gender inequality, and healthcare disparities. For example, educational initiatives targeting Girl's Education Project (GEP) aim to reduce gender gaps in education and empower girls to break the cycle of poverty. Similarly, school health education programmes raise awareness about preventive healthcare practices, reduce disease burden, and improve overall well-being. Since education is a function of creating an enlightened nation, it is germane to nation-building. The more people become enlightened, the more they will refrain from engaging in criminal practices that endanger nation-building efforts. For example, the educated elites will always want to be responsible and responsive citizens without being coarse before they do the right things that are tantamount to promoting the building of a strong nation and also working for its sustainability, unlike their counterparts who are not enlightened.

The essence of nation-building is to develop human capital, which can be realised through education. Education equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to participate effectively in the workforce and contribute to economic productivity. For example, initiatives like the Nigerian government's Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme aim to ensure that all children have access to quality primary education, laying the foundation for human capital development. Therefore, education efficiently utilises the nation's resources, which is crucial to nation-building. Without it, it becomes challenging to talk about nation-building and, more importantly, when resources are not effectively allocated and efficiently utilised. This is one of the things that makes a difference between developing and developed nations. The developed nations spent so much on bringing quality education to the doorsteps of their citizens by allocating 20% (percentage) of their annual national budget to the education sector as advised by UNESCO as an International Benchmark. The case of Nigeria is different because budgetary allocation to the education sector has not been closer to the UNESCO benchmark. For instance, in the last eight years of President Mohammadu Buhari's administration (2016-2023), the budgetary allocation to the education sector was given as follows:

Table 2:- Budgetary Allocation to the Education Sector.

Years	International Benchmark 20 %	% Allocation	Monetary Allocation
2016	20	7.9	#369.6 Billion
2017	20	7.4	#550.5 Billion
2018	20	7.04	#605.8 Billion
2019	20	7.05	#620.5 Billion
2020	20	6.7	#671.07 Billion
2021	20	5.68	#742.5 Billion
2022	20	7.2	#1.18 Trillion
2023	20	8.8	#1.79 Trillion

Source: Premium Times, Nov. 23, 2023. Accessed: 29/11/2023

Compared with other nations, the above data is far less than the international benchmark approved by UNESCO. For a nation to progress, we must be a community of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Education is a platform for promoting social cohesion and bridging ethnic, religious, and regional divides. Integrated schools and diverse educational environments allow students from different backgrounds to interact, collaborate, and develop mutual understanding (UNESCO, 2021). Initiatives such as scholarship programmes targeting marginalised communities help ensure inclusive education access, fostering social cohesion and national unity. Education is also crucial in forming cross-cutting cleavages that embrace diversity. Therefore, accepting their differences among the nationals is very important to nation-building because if a nation fails to accept its differences and come together to build the nation, progress will never be made. However, without education, such fear is alloyed. In the case of Nigeria, the more we accept that our diversity is a blessing in disguise, the more we join hands together to build a united, strong and self-reliant nation devoid of all forms of acrimony. Education empowers individuals to advocate for policy reforms and participate in democratic governance processes. Civil society organisations, student unions, and educational institutions serve as platforms for civic education, policy advocacy and youth engagement (Okeke-Uzodike & Nwokike, (Eds), 2015). For instance, student-led movements advocating for educational reforms have significantly shaped education policies and held governments accountable for their implementation.

Education fosters a sense of national identity, citizenship, and social responsibility essential for nation-building. For instance, educational curricula can incorporate civic education modules that promote values of democracy, tolerance, and civic engagement. By teaching students about Nigeria's history, cultural heritage, and democratic principles, education nurtures active and informed citizens committed to the country's progress. Also, the problem of transparent discrimination practices could better be solved through education for nation-building because nation-building requires a meritocratic bureaucracy to make the state's Actors and institutions very effective. With quality education, the country will have the best human resources that are competent enough to carry out the day-to-day affairs of the state. The implication is that the lower the quality of education, the collapse of state actors and institutions will occur.

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2014), spelt out among other goals and objectives of education in Nigeria, the inculcation of suitable types of values and attitudes for the survival of Nigerian society and so education is an instrument for nation-building in that it shapes the attitudes, behaviours and values of its citizens. These are among the prerequisite qualities that are germane for nation-building. Kochhar (2012) pointed out that education if oriented adequately concerning the knowledge that it impacts, the capacity for thinking that it develops, the training of emotions it undertakes and the practical activities it organises, can be a potent instrument in making people contribute to nation building.

Education nurtures entrepreneurial mindset and innovation, which are crucial for economic diversification and sustainable development. UNESCO (2021) posited that by providing students with practical skills, entrepreneurship education initiatives like the Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES) programme empower young Nigerians to start businesses, create jobs, and drive economic growth. Institutions such as the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) promote research and innovation in higher education institutions, fostering technological advancements and competitiveness in the global economy (Anchor, 2015).

Education and Development
Education is a human right, a powerful driver of development, and one of the most vital instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability. It delivers significant, consistent returns in income and is the most critical factor in ensuring equity and inclusion. Education is central to the development and improvement of the lives of young people globally. It has been identified as a priority area in internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and the World Programme of Action for Youth (Anchor, 2015; World Bank, 2019). Education plays a crucial role in bringing about development only if and when certain conditions have been met, not merely because education alone is provided as a matter of course, every time new regimes are ushered in and out. Ogbonnaya (2020) posited that education and economic development are deeply connected. Education provides individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in the workforce and contribute to economic growth and nation-building. Since education is the life wire of any nation, good education leads to significant growth and development, as it becomes impossible for any nation to rise above its standard of education. Therefore, Nigeria must appraise its present educational system and introduce innovations

to ensure it competes favourably with global standards (Okeke-Uzodike & Nwokike, 2015). A well-educated population is essential for developing a strong and competitive economy (WEF, 2019).

The following are generally considered to be the conditions that need to be met for education to properly serve the needs and requirements of the development of any nation, Nigeria inclusive:

1. A desired education should have articulated aims, which should focus on the country's development needs, be capable of solving the target society's problems, and reflect that society's needs. Governments can exhibit different research results rather than allow such works to gather dust on shelves. Such articulated aims have already been contained in the nation's National Policy on Education (FGN, 2014, 2020).

2. When these educational aims are articulated in terms of policies by all those sectors of the society, but especially teachers, parents, educational experts, as well as government and non-government stakeholders and supporters, among others that constitute the main stakeholders, should participate, not as a matter of courtesy but genuinely, in the process of formulating and designing those policies to work.

3. Education should be based on the country's overall development plan, be administered and managed by the level of the country's economic development, and with such level of quality as to ensure sustainable development outcomes while at the same time ensuring equitable participation of all.

Conclusion:-

By prioritising education and implementing policies that improve access, quality, and relevance, Nigeria can harness the transformative power of education for nation-building and development. Building a virile, strong, and stable nation is hinged on the education philosophy of such a nation. Over the years, Education programmes have contributed immensely to inculcating desirable values and attitudes that could build a virile nation. Having looked at how Education would promote nation-building for development, it has also been discovered that nation-building would remain unattainable if adequate and timely interventions are not implemented to rectify the challenges of nation-building as applicable to Nigeria. By addressing these critical areas through targeted educational interventions and policy reforms, Nigeria can harness the transformative power of education to advance its nation-building and development agenda, fostering inclusive growth, social cohesion, and sustainable progress.

Recommendations:-

The following are suggested to improve the contribution of Nigeria's educational system to nation-building:

1. The Federal Government should endeavour to earmark 20% of the total educational development budget as UNESCO recommended as an International Benchmark. However, a state in the country has taken the lead by earmarking 20.8% of the state's budgetary allocation for 2024 to Education. The Oyo State Government, led by Governor Makinde, has taken the bull by the horns (Feyisipo, 2023). Other states in the country can follow suit as well.

2. Education should be an affair and responsibility of Federal, State and Local Governments regarding funding, meaning that the stakeholders should adequately fund education. However, for better funding and adequate provision of infrastructural facilities, the funding of educational institutions in Nigeria should not be left in the hands of the governments at all levels alone, and now that the government is considered incapable of financing education hundred per cent. Volunteers and institutional alumni are invited to join hands with the government to provide other facilities/infrastructure for their alma mater!

3. The government at all levels should have a solid political will to fight against corruption in the country. Corruption has become a bane to the development of any nation in the world, and to curtain this menace, governments at all levels should have strong political will to do what is right to checkmate corrupt practices amongst the civil/public servants and politicians. This can be done by setting up a special court to try those alleged to have engaged in corrupt practices to facilitate the trial of such people, and whoever is the culprit should be made to face the music.

4. Severe punishment should be meted out to individuals who engaged in financial crimes and other corrupt practices in Nigeria without recur to whose horse is involved. Nigeria's government can follow in the footsteps of those nations that have introduced capital punishment as a penalty to whoever is convicted of corrupt practices. This would go a long way to checkmate corrupt politicians' excessive looting of the nation's treasury in collaboration with corrupt civil/public servants.

5. A steady political environment should ensure the continuity and maturity of policies aimed at nation-building. Good government policies should be allowed to continue after their tenure, especially those introduced to bring about nation-building and development. Good policies aimed at bringing about nation-building and

development should not be allowed to end with the administration that introduced such policy (es). This will help create a working system in Nigeria, and things will begin to fall into place for the citizenry. The narrative about Nigeria being an underdeveloped nation will change, and we will begin to be counted among the comity of developed nations of the World.

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