

**SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT IN**

**NIGERIA,**  
**GHANA**  
**AND THE**  
**PHILIPPINES**

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# Achieving the Overall Philosophy of Nigeria: Can the Library Help?

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## Abstract

*This discourse focused on the concept of justice and equality as indicators of the overall philosophy of Nigeria. It further identified education library and law library in particular, as one of the machineries that would consolidate the change agenda of President Mohammadu Buhari in finding a long lasting solution of sustainable peace and harmony in Nigeria. The paper concluded that the only option for Nigerian leaders, politicians and policy makers is to advocate and institute laws that would mandatorily compel the building, equipping and use of functional law libraries.*

**Key Words:** *Philosophy, Nigeria, Education, Library/Law Library*

## Introduction

All over the world, there is widespread concern among people about education and the proper way to be educated. This is because; the rapid changes in contemporary life seem to impose fresh conditions with which the society must contend (Etuk, 2010). Etuk further explains that, that is why people, generally, do not fail to talk about values and education with which philosophy is chiefly concerned among other things. Etuk also argued that there is obviously, no society without a system, formal or informal, although there may be differences in practices and programmes. Such differences are in general reflections of diverse beliefs regarding values, knowledge, reality, human nature as well as the good society.

From the foregoing, it is very pertinent to affirm that for any society or nation to achieve great success in all facets of endeavour, there should be a well articulated and implemented, philosophy of such a nation. Idang (2008) asserted that philosophy helps people decide wisely and act consistently and to discover values and the meaning of things. Thomas (2014) is of the view that philosophy is a system of ideas about human nature and the nature of the reality we live in. It is a guide for living, because the issues it addresses are basic and pervasive, determining the course we take in life and how we treat other people. To this end, Snauwaert (2012) argued that philosophy constitutes a mode of inquiry and a discipline that enriches the capacity for reflection and rational deliberation and hence it is essential for both democracy and practice of education in a democratic society. The author concluded that philosophy makes this contribution by providing frameworks for understanding and generating ideas, methods of reflection and analysis and disciplines (exercises) for the cultivation of

the capacity of reflection and rational deliberation. It is based on these that this paper examines the overall philosophy of Nigeria and how it has fared positively and negatively, what is to be done to improve the system and the explanation of the concept from home to national and to international levels. The paper also examines the impact of information and the overall need to establish and maintain digital law libraries in the country.

## **Nigeria's Overall Philosophy**

Nigeria's overall philosophy as stipulated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in its National Policy on Education, 4<sup>th</sup> edition in section I paragraph 2, which states as follows; that Nigeria will:

- Live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justices.
- Promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding.

The next section of this paper, therefore examines the issues of justice and equality in the Nigerian society.

## **The Concept of Justice and Equality in Nigeria**

The development of any nation depends on how she manages, handles, coordinates and regulates the tripod concepts of justice, equality and freedom. The three concepts work in tandem. The principle of justice simply explained, is to give each person or group of persons whether weak or strong what is his/her due and do demand the contribution of each on the basis of equal contribution. Aquinas (1969) views justice as the constant and perpetual will to render to everyone what is due to him; however, what is due is often expressed in a right, which is determined by national and conventional laws. If a person has a right, to have or do something, others have the duty to respect that claim on the balance of equal protection and reciprocity. He further stated that justice is a moral virtue which inclines the will constantly and perpetually to render to others their due in time and place and in a given set of circumstance. In affirmation, Ayeni (2013) stated that justice is the quality of being just, impartial, rightness, legitimacy, equity and fairness in awarding of what is due. Furthermore, the concept of justice cannot be properly understood within the context of this paper without due attention to the three major classical schools of thoughts of Justice. Hence;

- The Social Contract concept
- The Utilitarian concept
- The Respect concept

According to Ayeni (2013), the social contract concept of justice believes that a society such as Nigeria, is just, if its members mutually and freely consent to the rules or codes of the society, which in the short-run or in the long-run is advantageous to all, or for mutual self interest. One of the basic premises of this is that, societies are built around a set of norms, rules or do's or don'ts which are backed by sanctions to the content that conformists are rewarded while the deviants are penalised.

Positively, justice has prevailed in Nigeria as seen in the probing into the financial records of some citizens irrespective of their status in the society, who deviated from the ethics of their

professions. Example of such included the likes of former speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Dimeji Bankole; former Central Bank of Nigeria Governor, Alhaji Sanusi Lamido Sanusi and former Governor of Bayelsa State, Mr. Depriye Alamieyeseigha among others.

However, from the negative point of view, justice has failed to prevail politically, educationally and financially among others. In the political scene, justice has failed in several instances such as the case of Late MKO Abiola who won the June 12, 1993 presidential elections but was denied, imprisoned and killed. The prevailing issue of “godfatherism” in the polity, where political positions are attained through selection “man-know-man” and not elections. Educationally, justice has failed in that teachers at all levels of education are victimised underpaid and treated without respect. This treatment has so negatively influenced children who opt for other professions because they wish to receive the reward for their labours here on earth even as they popularly chant that “a teacher’s reward is in heaven”.

The case also abounds of injustice meted out to the University of Uyo, over the government’s refusal to pay its take off grant since its inception in 1991. From the financial aspect, injustices have been meted out to local governments and states where revenues are allocated not according to the derivation formula; not to mention the case where local governments’ allocations are hijacked by the state governors who utilise it for their personal aggrandisement while the local governments are left struggling to meet its wage bill. All these have threatened the existence of Nigeria as one indivisible and indissoluble entity.

The utilitarian concept of justice maintains that a society is just if it guarantees the greatest happiness to the greatest number. This is evident in the Nigerian society where the government has also tried to satisfy the majority tribes of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba to the neglect of minority groups. This has not fostered unity and harmony in Nigeria. The respect concept of justice maintains that the just society is that which people are treated as ends in themselves and never merely as means to an end. It also stated that, in a just society under this, people are respected because they are human beings not as a result of their social graces or bourgeoisie trappings.

This is however not applicable in the Nigerian society, in that, only the very rich, mighty, influential and political office holders are respected and treated as ends in themselves. The poor, down trodden and the no bodies are usually treated as just means to an end whose deaths, situations, rights and dues are nothing to take into consideration. This to a very large extent has threatened negatively the unity and harmony of the country.

## **The Concept of Equality in Nigeria**

This is a very complex, but highly related and strongly attached concept to justice. Equality as a concept has the notion that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive system of basic liberties, compatible with similar system of liberty for all and secondly, social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are attached to positions open to all, under conditions of equality of opportunity and are to the greatest benefit of the least privileged. Negatively, Ayeni (2013) argues that when the principle of equal opportunity is not observed; then there is a discrimination between classes and groups with little or no social mobility, where the natural resources which nature provides for the benefit of all is placed in the hands of a few who exploit the labour of the rest or where a great majority of the population live on the level of abject poverty or near poverty becomes the order of the day.

This situation is found in Nigeria where the monies derived from one part of the country (South-South, South- East and some part of South-West) are used to develop the other parts of the country such as the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, furthermore, the Nigerian entity has six geopolitical zones with six states each, except for the south East with five states. It is a recognised fact that all these inequalities have directly or indirectly led to several protests, kidnappings, killings, youth restiveness and more recently political and social insurgencies such as the Boko Haram in the North, the Niger Delta Avengers in the South and MASSOB in the East among others. This in turn, affects the unity and harmony of Nigeria as one indivisible and indissoluble entity.

### **Steps towards the Improvement of the Unity and Harmony of Nigeria**

Nigeria is blessed in every way; but the interplay of social forces, the struggle for power and primitive accumulation, mediocre leadership and the weak structures of the state have continued to complicate life for the ordinary citizen. It is as if ordinary Nigerians are being punished for being citizens of this country (Ihonvbere, 2014). The author further stated that to ensure a steady and qualitative improvement in the lives of the people, in their socio-economic, political, cultural and spiritual development, the protection of their environment, the decolonization of their minds and putting in the middle of holistic and sustainable growth and development, 5 basic steps must be put in place. These are to:

- Strengthen the Nigerian state
- Redefine and strengthen leadership at all levels
- Generate positive political will for positive action
- Review the constitution: Build it on the people
- Reform political parties for democracy

### **Generating Positive Political Will for Positive Action**

It is obvious that one of the major problems of Nigeria is that people often tend to think small. There is the lack of capacity for vision. To this end, Ihonvbere (2014) opined that until the Nigerian polity generates the political power to address issues that are critical to our development especially food production, industrialisation, infrastructural development, power, housing, education and tourism the Nigerian society would not live in unity and harmony. The author also stated that it should be indisputable that the will to terminate poverty, pursue justice, and respect, the rule of law must guide individual and collective determination to move Nigeria forward and improve the unity and harmony of the country.

### **Reforming Political Parties for Democracy**

In Nigeria, politics is war. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo was credited with saying that election is a 'do or die' affair thus candidates are sponsored for political positions not necessarily based on competence but on their predisposition to being manipulated and ability to pursue narrow interests. To solve this problem, modern democracies should be built on political parties with well and people oriented manifestoes, periodic competitive elections, public policy and programmes, by this achievement, the country will be united and live in harmony.

## **Reviewing the Constitution: Building it on the People**

Constitution making process, properly anchored on the people, their communities and constituencies is often an opportunity to popularise the constitution, mobilise the people, increase political awareness and education, strengthen people discourses on contemporary issues and build new platforms of unity and harmony. For Nigerians such a process would provide an opportunity to deal with issues of re-federalisation, fiscal federalism, local governance, structures of governance, socio-economic and human rights and other issues that have been raised in related debates; by so doing, the Nigerian government would have produced a document that would engender peace, stability, dialogue, tolerance, diversity, democracy and most importantly, unity and harmony in Nigeria.

At this point, it should be noted that the Nigerian government should evince the political will to be guided by the provisions contained in such document as such documents are generally regarded as the grundnorm in foreign climes.

## **Unity and Harmony from Home to National and International**

It is vital to maintain unity and harmony in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious country of Nigeria with more than 250 ethnic groups and various religious beliefs divided across geo-political lines of Muslim North and Christian South, with the nation's unity and harmonious existence being woefully threatened by non compliance in totality with the principles of freedom, equity and justice. To this and, the concept of home becomes important not only in maintaining unity in Nigeria, but in upholding peace and tranquility among Nigerians.

Accepting this stance, Suhails (2012) posited that Nigerians should regard all and sundry as one and that parents at home and teachers in schools should orient the children about the importance of equality.

Nationally, the Nigerian entity was built on the foundations of tolerance and solidarity. As Nigerians, we should uphold the Nigerian dream of unity in diversity and stay strong, peaceful, and united despite the bitter economic challenges that are facing us today. The Federal Government must step in to enlighten the general public, especially the ignorant and illiterate population about unity and harmonious co-existence among the citizenry with the central theme of equality, freedom and justice. This can be achieved by the encouragement and revitalisation of activities that bring the country together such as the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), sports festivals, cultural festivals, federal and unity schools among others.

## **The Library as a Mechanism of Justice and Equality for Sustainable Unity and Harmony in Nigeria**

Education is an instrument par excellence for the development of any nation that is serious and focused on its destination; this is because it involves the wholesome development of the individual in every facet of his life whether intellectually, psychologically, socially, vocationally, religiously or morally. Okiy (n.d) affirms that education is a process through which people are formally and informally trained to acquire knowledge and skills. The formal training comes from established schools from the basic level to the tertiary level while the non-formal education is got where people are tutored in various skills set/knowledge in non-formal surroundings; through the process of formal education however, people are expected to obtain knowledge and relevant skills and hence specialise in specific fields of study.

It is pertinent at this point to emphasize that it is only through this process of acquiring relevant skills-set and knowledge that people will be empowered intellectually to arise and participate in national discourse thereby holding political office holders accountable to fulfill their electoral promises which will directly contribute to national development as well as sustain unity and harmony in the polity.

Okiy (n.d.) citing Aboyade, 1984; Brooks, 1990; Mohammed; (1996) explained that National Development involves economic growth modernisation, equitable distribution of income and national resources and socio-economic transformation for improved living standards of people through the use of a country's human, natural and institutional resources. She goes further to argue that it is the level and quality of occupational participation and productivity of a populace that are important contributory factors to the level of economic and overall development of any nation.

The library is focal to the provision of the right type of information resources in the suitable format that empowers the educational institutions to produce extremely ingenious people who will in turn be interested enough to exert a positive influence on the development of any nation such as Nigeria.

It is no longer news that in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, information and communication technology (ICT) has come to stay; it has permeated every aspect of the nation, no profession is immune from it; even the conservative legal profession has had no choice but to embrace and accept it, vocations such as welding, car repairs (mechanics) have all gone digital as some of the educated mechanics conduct online searches to diagnose correctly the faults in the vehicles brought to them for repairs.

Most libraries have gone digital while some simply have digitised collections in a traditional setting; be that as it may; law libraries are not being left out in this move to transform resources and services to serve clients better in this technological era. In all this however, it is only the nation that is conscious of the relevance of information and libraries in the drive towards the quickened development of a nation that can survive and flourish in the comity of nations in this information age.

In tracing the evolution of education with libraries, Information Science Today.org (2009) narrates that educational materials and Buddhist scriptures, were stored in "pitakataik" a library that was founded by King Mindon Min during the pre-colonial era and this further reinforced the destinies of libraries with education. Libraries and education thus became symbiotically and inexorable dependent on each other. Over the years, we have learned that the library, education, literacy and national development always went hand in hand and have influenced everyone from the primary school students to those at the highest levels of education. The foregoing goes to show that education and libraries are dependent on each other; where one survives: the other thrives and where one is non-existent, the other ceases to exist. This goes to show that both work hand-in-hand to produce the intellectuals, philosophers, heroes and leaders who arise in the society and chart the course for the future.

Onoyeyan and Adesina (2014) citing Forsyth (2005) claim that libraries are integral to community development as they provide access to information and works of imagination in a variety of formats. Onoyeyan and Adesina (2014) citing Makotzi (2004) stress that libraries go beyond formal education; they encourage and sustain literacy and support development. The authors further espoused that the role of libraries in the provision of information for development is trite. They further stated that no nation can be developed without relevant information to drive its developmental sustainability.

The business of libraries is the acquisition, organisation; dissemination and preservation of information for development. Law libraries are a type of libraries which are often described as special.

They are distinct from other types of libraries because they stock different type of information resources such as legal textbooks, legal journals, law reports, law digests, official gazettes, statute books etc.

Law libraries also service a specific kind of clients. They are established primarily to meet the information needs of the law makers, judges, lawyers, barristers, solicitors, law teachers, law students, people interested in legal research etc.

The afore mentioned groups of people have a fundamental role to play in the development of a nation as they determine the state of the nation in terms of long-lasting peace, tolerance, regional acceptance among others, thus, there is need for an effective and speedy information dissemination to this group as well as other policy formulators and implementators.

## **The Way Forward**

The sole agenda of the present administration includes: good governance, tracing and recovery of stolen government loot by political office holders and ridding all tiers of the Nigerian society of corruption. In other words, this present administration led by President Mohammed Buhari is on a quest to ensure a corruption free society as well as to ensure the recovery of Nigerian money from foreign nations. However; this feat can only be achieved through adequate organisation and dissemination of all forms of information for future reference; such information must be kept in an organised manner for easy accessibility and retrieval by qualified citizens with the requisite platform to articulate and agitate for positive changes in government policies etc. This can only be possible when the information has the law implications, which can only be made available by the law library.

The change agenda as vigorously pursued by this government can speedily become a reality through development of standard digitalised law libraries which would serve as the information bank of the nation. In other words, this nation cannot achieve good governance, strengthening of the Nigerian currency (Naira), recovery of the nation's resources and a corrupt free society through defeating corruption without first putting in place well developed digitalised law libraries in all universities.

Since the law library can be described as a place where legal books and non-book materials are kept in an organised manner for easy identification and retrieval, the change agenda of the present administration can be attained and sustained through development of legal institutions with standard digitised law libraries that could collect, organise, preserve, retrieve and adequately disseminate legal information to her patrons who comprise mainly of lawyers, barristers, solicitors, judges, law makers, law teachers etc. It is this group of people, who armed with a firm grasp of the law, can articulate people-friendly policies, sponsor bills which are hinged on justice, equity and fair play, lead local, national and international advocacy on addressing the many injustices that abound in the Nigerian state.

It is this same group of enlightened individuals who by their training are well suited to draw the attention of international bodies to the apparent and perceived irregularities in the country, unfavourable government policies, suppression of the public will, favouritism, unequal development of the different regions in the country etc. This group of people who after conducting well-balanced research in the law libraries will be well equipped to promote justice, equity and advocate for a truly egalitarian Nigerian nation where all men will be treated as equals regardless of race, tribe and religious affiliation. It is only and when this is done, that the philosophy of Nigeria can be attained and further sustained for National Development.

## Conclusion

The problems, challenges and contradictions of the Nigerian society is not created by any supernatural being. They were created by Nigerians, most of whom are well known, and therefore the problems must be solved by same people. Nigerian leaders must promote justice, equity and freedom towards the realisation of the philosophy of the nation which is built on unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation.

The paper concludes that the options before the Nigerian leaders, politicians, policy makers, government and indeed all, are to build a well equipped and digitalized law library with state of the art facilities in Information and Communication Technology; recreate a mindset that is free from tribalism and selfish thoughts. They have to also take themselves and the people seriously by making tangible efforts to fulfill their electoral promises to the electorate, improve on their environment and living conditions of the people or be ready to face the revolutionary pressures and militant actions springing up from all facets of the Nigerian society.

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