MULTICULTURALISM AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL COMPONENT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The concept of sustainable development has no longer been defined from a strictly environmental perspective for quite a few years now. The scope of the problem has been enlarged to include its social dimensions, leading notably to a renewed focus on the topic of national social and cultural diversity. Social component of sustainability is focused on human rights, social inclusion, civic engagements and aimed at preserving the stability of social and cultural systems, which includes the reducing of tensions and conflicts between people, maintaining a peaceful coexistence and tolerance between different nations and ethnicity. In order to achieve those sustainable development aims, our modern society should establish a more efficient decision-making system taking into account cultural diversity and encourage pluralism. This study therefore argues that multiculturalism is an indispensable tool for national integration, sustainable cultural development and consequently influence all spheres of the state policy making in Nigeria.

Key words: Multiculturalism, socio-cultural, sustainable, development, Nigeria.

Introduction

Multiculturalism, as a term, was first used in first the 1960s, in Canada. It became an alternative for „cultural pluralism," another term, which continues to be rather popular in some parts of the world. Multiculturalism refers to those societies that are characterized by ethnic or cultural heterogeneity. It is also used to refer to an ideal of equality and mutual respect among a population's ethnic or cultural groups. Sometimes it can become a political term as well. Multiculturalism is, in fact, the resume of an idea: living in cultural diversity means respecting our differences, as diversity is a common characteristic of many territories. The terms "multiculturalism" and "diversity" have been used interchangeably to include aspects of identity stemming from gender, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or age. Multiculturalism, in an absolute sense, recognizes the broad scope of dimensions of race, ethnicity, language, 10 sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, class status, education, religious/spiritual orientation, and other cultural dimensions. All of these are critical aspects of an individual's ethnic/racial and personal identity, and psychologists are encouraged to be cognizant of issues related to all of these dimensions of culture. In addition, each cultural dimension has unique issues and concerns. As noted by the Guidelines for Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients (APA, 2000), each individual belongs to/identifies with a number of identities and some of those identities interact with each other.Multiculturalism also is directly related to global shifts of power, population, and culture in the era of globalization

and "postcolonialism," as nations around the world establish independence in the wake of the decline of Western empires.

The concept of "multiculturalism" also has a history rooted in theories of human rights, democracy, human equality, and social justice. The concern to create a more "culturally diverse" curriculum owed much to the intellectual and social movements associated with the U.S. Civil Rights revolution of the 1960s.

Friedrich Heckmann distinguished seven different uses of the terms multiculturalism:
- First, "multiculturalism" or "multicultural society" are used as indicators of social change, referring to the changing ethnic composition of the population; an allegedly rather homogeneous population has become more heterogeneous. In this sense, "multicultural society" is a descriptive category.
- Secondly, the terms are used in what might be called a normative-cognitive way. This use could be circumscribed as follows: we should recognize the fact that we have become a country of immigration, that we need immigration, at present and in the future, and should accept the social and cultural consequences.
- A third use describes both an attitude and a norm: multiculturalism as tolerance toward others; as friendly and supportive behaviour toward immigrants; as a liberal and democratic attitude which is based (among other things) on learning from the errors and fatal consequences of nationalism, chauvinism, and ethnic intolerance.
- Fourthly, multiculturalism is an interpretation of the concept of culture: there are no "pure," original cultures. Each culture has incorporated elements of other cultures; cultures are the result of interaction with one another; culture is continuous process and change. In this sense, the cultures of immigrants are seen as opportunities for the enrichment of one's own culture.
- Fifth, on a more superficial level, multiculturalism is an attitude that looks upon some aspects of the immigrants' culture (folklore, food, for example) and sees these as possible enrichment of "our" culture. Very often, in a socio-romantic view, the immigrants are viewed as people with qualities that "we have lost" (emotions, stable social relations, spontaneity, etc.); we could learn from them. "The unifying and homogenizing effects of the nation-state are looked upon as an achievement that should not be easily given up."
- Multiculturalism as a political-constitutional principle is a sixth meaning in the discussion, referring to ethnic identities as a major basis for political and state organization, for the distribution of rights and resources; it means the reinforcing of ethnic pluralism, ethnic autonomy, and speaks out against acculturation or assimilation, against one "state language."
- It is regarded as a critical category, multiculturalism is regarded as a well-intended, but illusory concept which overlooks the necessity for a common culture, language, and identification to enable societal and state integration and stability. The unifying and homogenizing effects of the nation-state are looked upon as an achievement that should not be easily given up.

All around the world there are multicultural spaces, where people with different cultural and religious roots live and work in a continuous struggle for a better future, for themselves and their children. They share a geographical, historical and political space, giving it a new cultural perspective. The indication of a multicultural space is multilingualism, ethnicity and cultural diversity. Today's world is characterized by multiculturalism mainly due to the urban population flow. Major world commercial centres accommodate peoples of diverse culture.

Ironically, however, African states have the biggest share of this mix due to the fact that they are a product of an imperial enterprise. Nigeria has the highest mix of peoples and nations in Africa.

Sustainable development has been considered as one of the most significant issues in political discourse for the last few decades. It includes three key aspects such as, economic, environmental and social sustainability. The concept of sustainable development has no longer been defined from a strictly environmental perspective for quite a few years now. The scope of the problem has been enlarged to include its social dimensions, leading notably to a renewed focus on urban development, and more particularly, on the topic of cities' social and cultural diversity. Social sustainability is often ignored in the development plan whereas environmental and economic aspects are mostly focused. Social cohesion, cultural traditions, community cohesion, social interaction etc., are the significant factors for social sustainability (Dempsey, et al., 2009). Therefore, a socially cohesive society is one of the important prerequisites for the social sustainability, and thus for the sustainable development.The possible role of multiculturalism as a pillar for sustainable development has been attracting a lot of interest worldwide. Many countries, especially developing countries, such as Nigeria, are still grappling with the idea of sustainability. Worldwide, there is a growing demand for standards and policies to promote sustainable development. Cultural and cultural diversity have been identified as significant in sustainable development. Culture engenders economic growth, provides individuals and communities with increased life choices; it encourages adaptation to socio-economic, political and ecological change. Though in Nigeria cultural diversity is sometimes seen as a limitation to development, elsewhere, rich cultural diversity has provided people with varied inspirations which nurture human capacities. Since culture is dynamic, undergoing changes in time and space and can be created and recreated, its capacity for sustainable development is almost limitless.

Nigeria is a plural society in terms of its multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature. The country has more than 400 ethnic groups (Suberu, 1998) and two major religions (Islam and Christianity). Of all the federal democracies in the world, only India can match Nigeria's cultural complexity (Joseph, 2006). If well managed, this factor of unity in diversity would have been a major asset to the Nigerian state, but the contrary is the case. Nigeria's cultural diversity is politicized and exploited by the elite in such a way that retards the nation's growth and progress. The problem affects all aspects of Nigeria's national life – federal and even local resource allocation, management of public institutions (Ake, 1996), and youth development (Akinyele, 2001). The problem has fueled several bloody clashes between ethnic neighbours across the country (Otite and Albert 1999), destabilized the country most especially at national level (Mustapha 2002, 2004) and even produced a civil war (1967 to 1970) (Nafziger 1983). The most threatening of the problems faced by the country is ethnicity. Mustapha 2002 defined the concept as "the employment or mobilization of ethnic identity and difference to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict or cooperation". Georgiou (1984) argues that for some "a truly multicultural society would make provision for the use of all languages in everyday affairs, including official's transactions".

Further, it has become obvious to most Nigerians that the mere possession of abundant natural resources does not in itself guarantee development. Neither has the variety of economic blueprints attempted in Nigeria made a fundamental difference to the economic and social wellbeing of the average citizen. The paradox of mass poverty in the midst of abundant oil and other natural resources, and the inability to translate ambitions and well-crafted development plans into concrete reality have all driven home the centrality of the human factor in the progress

and development of nations. The significance of the human factor brings us squarely to the domain of the attitudes, the orientation, the cultural diversity, the motivations and the values underlying the behaviour and actions not only of the general population but particularly of the governing elite which steers the mantle of leadership in the society. This underlies the need to understand the role of multiculturalism particularly as it relates to sustainable development and nation-building.

The poser, therefore, is, if the feeling of national identity is being threatened by an increasing cultural diversity, what can a nation-state like Nigeria (which is a good example of a society in which cultural divisions appear especially implacable) do? The "national question" had dominated Nigerian politics since before independence in 1960. The vilification of ethnicity as the scapegoat of all vices associated with the Nigerian body polity has made the subject a dominant theme in the study of Nigerian political economy. How then has her leaders upheld the nation's ideal of a "just and egalitarian society" by reducing inequalities in interpersonal incomes, promoting balanced development among various communities in different geographical areas of the country? How has Nigeria managed or how can it manage its ethnic and cultural diversity to attain national integration and sustainable development? These, amongst others, are what this article seeks to examine.It is in this regard that this study explored the potential of multiculturalism as a sociocultural component of sustainable development.

Methodology

The study relied on literature to describe the role of multiculturalism as a socio-cultural component of sustainable development in Nigeria and from this deductions, gaps were drawn. Also, the study employed secondary data from secondary sources such as National Information Centers, National Bureau of Statistics. A critical analysis, review and documentation of information gathered from these various sources were used for this study. The use of this data collection is quite efficient for collecting qualitative information as involved in the present research study.
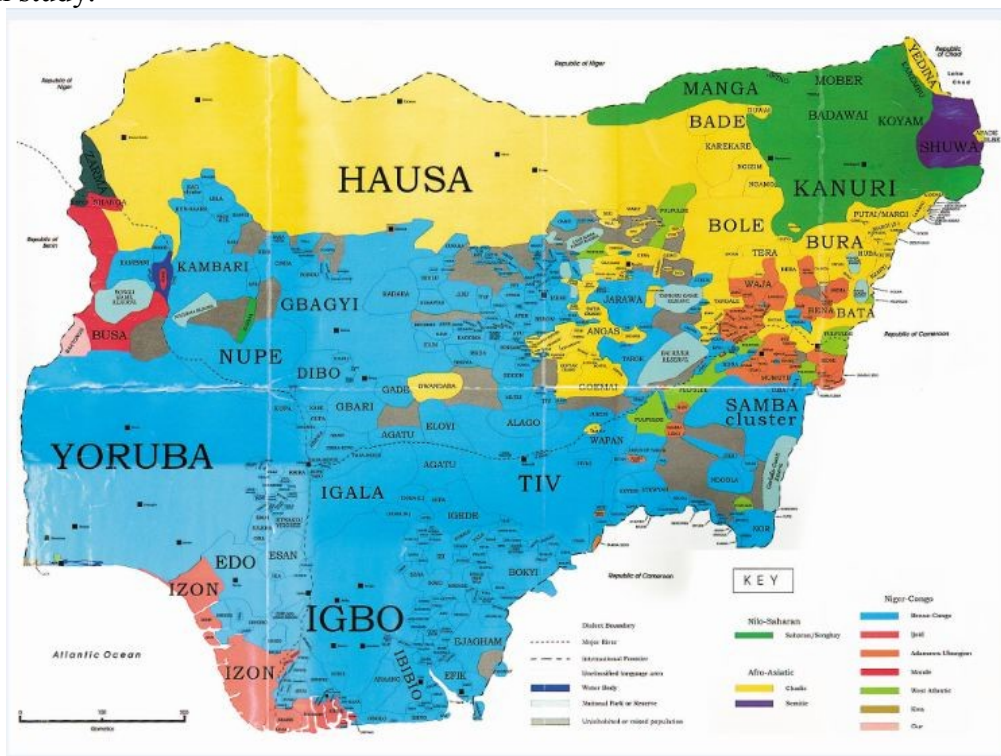

Figure 1. Map of Nigeria showing various ethnic group

Presentation of Findings
Multiculturalism and National Integration: The Nigeria Experience

The structure of Nigeria was forcefully assembled through the technological and economic superiority of the British government in 1914, by amalgamating the Northern and the Southern protectorate (Ekanola, 2006). This singular act brought together numerous linguistic, ethnic, cultural groups, communities, kingdoms, and caliphate, which respectively then had attained different levels of economic and political development. These entities which had different, many unrelated, cultural, traditional and historical backgrounds were foisted together to form a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-national society. This arrangement was purposed to satisfy imperialistic desires (Ifeanacho and Nwagwu, 2009). Ifeanacho and Nwagwu aver that the Nigeria structure did not, in any way, depict integration but a mere 'production plant' to meet the needs of the metropolitan economy.

Following this artificial creation of a resemblance of multiculturalism, the true nature of the conflagration of these multiplicities of culture carry with it attendant suspicion, intolerance, discrimination and hostility, making it difficult to have a true and successful national integration. Right after independence, ethnic and tribal practices that pervaded the political environment at colonial period, which was obviously reflected in the formation of political parties, began to tire the new state apart. In 1966, increased tension had enveloped the entire country, culminating in violence among the regions and ethnic groups, most especially between the East and the North. The quantum killing of the Northern and Eastern soldiers.

It is important to note that when the issue of multiculturalism is not treated it will continue to threaten the peaceful co-existence of the nation-state. This untreated or ill-treated issue of national integration has been most instrumental to the challenges of nationhood and the togetherness of these multi-nations which were hitherto separated. Ogbu (2001) defines the zoning system as "an equitable sharing of the key political posts taking the state of origin of the beneficiaries into consideration". Despite how attractive this principle of zoning or rotation may seem, there has been unclear explanation on how it would be implemented to reach the over three hundred ethnic groups in Nigeria to alleviate the cries of the minorities, owing to the fact that the principle only recognises the existence of six geopolitical zonal structure (Okwenna, 2011), which will always face the issue of domination by numerically stronger ethnic groups.The unattended issues of multiculturalism in Nigeria have continued to give impetus to a growing political consciousness and ethno-religious identity which always culminate in communal and societal conflicts. The fragile peace in Nigeria most often falls apart, resulting in horrible violence. This includes, among others, claim over land and scarce resources (Berom-Fulani crisis, Ijaw-Itsekiri crisis), power and chieftaincy (Ife-Modakeke crisis), Osu catse system (Umuleri-Aguleri crisis), settlers and indigenes (Jos crisis), Christian and Moslem (violence in Kano and Kaduna) and most recently, the Boko Haram menace (Adagba, Ugwu and Eme, 2012).

Insecurity has reached a record high in Nigeria due to the activities of the Boko Haram to Islamize a secular state such as Nigeria. The spade of bombing and quantum killing by the sect remains the most recent threat to the Nigeria project. This has, however, brought about a reawakening of the clamour for secession from the Nigeria state by Biafra, some others a call for national conference where the terms for co-existence would be discussed, while yet some others, a call for true federalism where all state will be independent of the centre. A sovereign national conference could initiate the process of understanding and appreciating our diversity, a people oriented and all inclusive constitutional overhaul will help us respect it.

Multicultural Education in Nigeria

Nigeria is also a multilingual and multicultural state therefore multilingual and multicultural education programs are a necessary element in today's schools. According to Adagba, Ugwu and Eme, 2012, the ever increasing numbers of immigrants from all over the world require a continued demand for teachers with skills to work with limited English proficient students. The position of the Nigerian Government is made clear in the N.P.E (2004) 4th edition that the language of environment shall be taught as (Li) where it was orthography and literature. Where it does not have, it shall be taught with emphasis on oralcy as (L2). This is called indigenous language policy which attempts to give recognition to and actualize the multicultural approach for effective socialization.
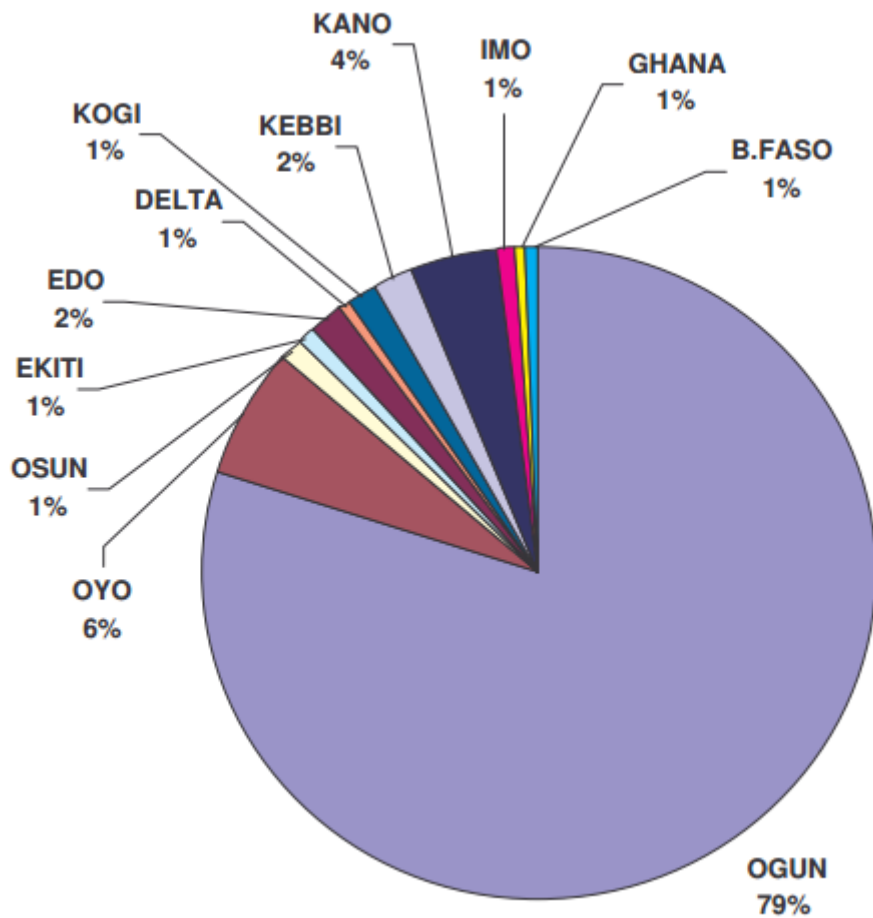

Figure 2: Cultural and Racial Diversity in Ogun State, Nigeria (Author's own editing)

Multiculturalism plays a major role in education and nation building, de-ethnicizing the population with an aim of constructing a unitary conception of the nation. People in a heterogeneous society such as Nigeria are characterized by groups, class, beliefs, attitudes, values, interests and intentions. These diversities however have been positively harnessed for greatness by other nations of the world but the case is quite different in Nigeria due inadequate knowledge of multicultural education. This is despite the fact that our heroes past have long realized this as far back as the twilight of independence when they sang in our national anthem, thou tribes and tongues may differ in brotherhood we stand. Therefore, teaching with a multicultural perspective will encourage appreciation and understanding of other cultures as well as one's own. Teaching with multicultural strategies promotes the child's sense of uniqueness of his own culture as a positive characteristic and enables the child to accept the

uniqueness of the culture of others. It is noteworthy to state that if multicultural education is well harnessed in Nigeria, it has the potential of creating a safe, accepting and successful learning environment for all; increasing awareness of global issues; strengthening cultural consciousness; Strengthening intercultural awareness; teaching students that there are multiple historical perspectives; encouraging critical thinking in multicultural perspective; preventing prejudice and discrimination; creating the ability to work and live with a multicultural perspective and developing respect and appreciation for culturally different people.

Multiculturalism and Cultural Tourism Potential in Nigeria

Cultural tourism is based on cultural heritage. It calls for a journey back to our roots, for rediscovering who we are in the eyes of the others and it also helps us find and bring to light our own inner world. In the same time, multiculturalism brings us closer to each other. Living together in a town, a region, a country or a continent, means not only sharing material goods, but spiritual treasures as well. Cultural tourism represents the binding material between the cultural and the economical spheres. A cultural center is often an economical centre as well. Whether we recognize it or not, money sustains cultural events, by giving the artists the possibility and the freedom to be creative. On the other hand, cultural activities and objectives attract visitors, while local products attract their money. This is how the economy of a region and well-promoted cultural tourism form a towns' spiral of evolution, creating a constant and positive trend, leading to sustainable development.

Nigerian cultures are diverse in nature and like most other cultures in the world have been influenced by external factors within the context of globalization. In recent times, cultural regeneration has become a central theme in Nigeria among scholars, enlightened citizens and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with the understanding that to harness the cultural resources of Nigeria is the best bet to usher the country to the path of sustainable development. Nigeria have to preserve our cultural values, not just the ones belonging to a special ethnic group. That is why a multicultural space, more fragile and complex than a simple one, can be even more valuable than the first, from the point of view of cultural tourism.Cultural tourism if fully exploited will promote sustainable development and place Nigeria strategically in a position where exportation of culture to the global environment becomes a reality.Investment in sustainable tourism, including eco-tourism and cultural tourism, which may include creating small and medium sized enterprises will impact positively on the sustainable development of Nigeria. Facilitating access to finance, through micro-credit initiatives for the poor, indigenous peoples and Local communities in areas with high eco-tourism potential is also a worthy prerequisite for sustainable development. Every planning aimed at achieving sustainable development in Nigeria should recognize the Local cultural values, equal rights and cultural logic of the respective communities in policy planning and decision-making.

General Remarks on Implications of Multiculturalism for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Multiculturalism enhances an appreciation of the value of diversity and differences in a democratic culture, thus helping to integrate diverse cultures into the larger society without cutting them off from their past.This in turn helps to reinforce the polity because citizens are willing to make sacrifices or compromises for those with whom they have common project or interest. The diffusion of commonly shared values promotes integration.

In addition, the balance which multiculturalism promotes between equality and protection of rights of persons will enhance effective democratization and the development of a sound political culture. As a policy of accommodation, tolerance and inclusiveness without prejudice, discrimination on the basis of origin, sex, religion and ethnic association would be minimized. This approach has been counter-productive in most cases for several reasons. Firstly, it amounts to replacing a primary discrimination with a tertiary one, thereby extending the bounds of discrimination and giving same an official stamp. Secondly, non-speakers of such elevated languages view this as an attempt to arrogantly impose on them values that are alien.

Thus, these efforts rather than engender integration and development has brought about suspicion, and distrust. Furthermore speakers of the "minor languages" have introduced these so called minor languages in educational curriculum at the local levels to check the flourishing of the national languages, and whatever cultural or value re-orientation it aimed to achieve. Such surreptitious elevation of some languages and consequently, some values and practices at the expense of others is bound to have social consequences, because local languages are the most veritable tool for social mobilization and the building blocks for learning. The point is that the affirmation and recognition of the importance of all languages and promotion of a cultural and political climate that encourages their flourishing should be a basic starting point in the search for a national language. This will ensure that when a national language emerges ultimately through the natural processes of adjustments, persuasion and mutual acceptability, a climate that fosters and encourages sustainable development would have been in place.

Multiculturalism provides the required background for appropriate modifications of the diversities in languages and other cultural attributes to enhance development. Directly linked to the language problem is the majority and minority problem in Nigeria. These problem manifests whenever the major or larger ethnic groups appeal directly or indirectly to its numericalstrength to allot more than its fair share of social goods to itself. In other word when numerical strength is considered the sole or most important criterion in the distribution of social goods. The minor or small ethnic groups are thus conceived as no more than existential appendages. Such situations generate unnecessary tensions that slow down both integration and development (Gwunireama, 2008).

Lastly, poverty remains a very serious threat to democratization and development in Nigeria. As a multifaceted phenomenon, poverty finds expression in virtually all aspects or spheres of activity in Nigeria, hence, typically characterized with political, economic or cultural deprivations. A multicultural philosophy can shorten or prevent transient poverty from transforming to an absolute kind. In fact, the non-material dimensions of poverty can effectively be checked while a formidable base is provided for minimizing the material dimensions of poverty. For emphasis, reduction of the levels or dimensions of poverty is also one vital tool for the elimination of apathy in matters of governance, or political commitment by Nigerians; which in turn is a necessity, if corruption is to be tackled headlong.

> *'Multiculturalism established that we all have needs and desires; we have likes and dislikes but there is nothing threatening in the differences. We are all seeking a better life for ourselves and future generations and there is no place for an 'us and them (Government of South Australia(2015)'.*

Recommendations and Conclusion

Multiculturalism is a fact of life in the sense that virtually every human culture is influenced by another in terms of lending and borrowing new ways of life, music, food, art and even knowledge. It is such interactions that make life meaningful in a sense. As a matter of fact, despite resistances against multicultural influences, most societies are already multicultural and characterized by cultural hybridity. This fact is what Jeremy Waldron (1990) emphasizes when he argues that: We live in a world formed by technology and trade; by economic, religious and political imperialism and their offspring; by mass migration and dispersion of cultural influences. A multicultural philosophy would promote unity and in turn can fast track development. This seems sure in view of the multicultural aim of promoting oneness of life among different cultures of society. Such unity in the midst of diversity is a fundamental cornerstone for Nigeria's integration. Finally, the need to enforce or maintain universal equality while at the same time protect individual or group rights will ensure a social balance that promotes the democratic culture of tolerance and accommodation required for a sustainable development.

Sustainable development in this sense will be all encompassing and not one dimensional, which often times, improvement in one sphere creates disequilibrium in several others. There would be quantitative progress (economic) but enhanced and provided for by efficient structural changes (qualitative changes) in attitudes, environmental care, intellectual depth and growth, as well as a general willingly and commitment to social progress.

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