

CHAPTER FOUR

NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND IDENTITY

3.1 NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

It is the conscious awareness of one's feeling as a member of a particular nation. This means the feeling one has as a member of a country.

The national consciousness is a vision, that is the product of the pooled dreams of a people committed to work for the realization of their dream. The commitment of the people to work for their dreams.

National Consciousness is also the feeling that all of the people in a given state share important things in common. If true national consciousness arises, the people will be able to see that they are all in "the same boat" and that what is good for one is good for all. They will understand that they should not see themselves as members of separate classes, races or tribes. Rather, they should understand that their destinies are bound up with one another.

In Nigeria, our national consciousness was very strong during the fight against colonialism and it was used to fight for political independence from British.

However, since independence our national consciousness is at low ebb. Therefore, there is need for serious awareness and enlightenment in this area. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) needs to do a lot of work to orientate and re-orientate Nigerians towards national consciousness. For example, the ambitious exercise of rebranding Nigeria is not only geared at positively projecting Nigeria's image to the outside world, but also to engender attitudinal change in us; a change in our mindset; a change in our cultural values and orientation; that would inspire us to take pride in our country. This is a good awareness of national consciousness for all Nigerians inside and outside Nigeria.

A **nation** simply means a community of people who are united under a single government and share many things in common. People in a nation share the following:

- (i) Common territory.
- (ii) Economic life.
- (iii) Political System
- (iv) Constitution
- (v) Armed forces etc.

A **state** refers to legal/political entity that is comprised of the following:

- (i) a permanent population
- (ii) a define territory.
- (iii) a government
- (iv) the capacity to enter into relations with other states.

In a nutshell, the terms nation, state, country and nation-state are used to refer to political, economic, social and cultural actors in the international system. The modern nation-state refers to a single or multiple nationalities joined together in a formal political union.

Patriotism

Patriotism is a love of and loyalty to one's country. A **patriot** is someone who loves, supports, and is prepared to serve his/her country. It is the ability and willingness of the citizen to promote and uphold the basic characteristic and existence of a country.

I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives.

I like to see a man, lives so that his place will be proud of him – Abraham

Lincoln on National Patriotism.

Be a patriotic Nigeria.

National Identity

National identity refers to the behaviours, traits and ideas that are commonly share by the people of a nation. They are the characteristics by which a nation can be recognized. They are set of traits and symbols that are identified within a nation which makes it different from other nations.

National Symbols

National symbols include the following:

1. The Coat of Arms
2. The National Flag
3. The National Anthem
4. The National Pledge
5. The National Currency
6. The National Passport
7. The Constitution
8. National Identity Card
9. The Unity Lamp

MEANING AND HISTORY OF NATIONAL SYMBOLS

The Coat of Arms

The Coat of Arms is also referred to as **armorial bearing**, is a set of pictures or designs painted on a shield and used as the special symbol of a country.

The Nigeria's Coat of Arms stands for the country's authority, strength, unity and wealth. It has a **motto of unity and faith, peace and progress**.

The **black shield** on the Coat of Arms, stands for the fertile land of the country while the **'Y' shape silver bands** represent the two important rivers, the Niger and Benue rivers and their confluence.

The **two white horses** in the Coat of Arms **stand for integrity and dignity of the country**, while **the Red Eagle** on the top of the Coat of Arms stands **for strength, gallantry and pride**.

The **flowering plant** at the bottom of the shield, is a species of cactus plant and represents the tenacity and resilience of the people of Nigeria.



Nigerian Coat of Arms

The National Flag

The national flag is a piece of cloth used in identifying a country and expressing its beliefs, values and people.

The national flag was adopted at independence in 1960. Before independence, Nigerians used the British National flag known as the "Union Jack". The Nigeria national flag has colours of **green, white and green**. The **green represents agriculture** and **the vast resources of the country** while the **white** stands for **unity and peace**. A Nigerian, Mr. Taiwo Akinkunmi designed Nigerian's national flag in 1959.



Picture Showing Nigerian Flag

National Anthem

The national anthem is usually sung by all Nigerians. It has no religious, ethnic or political undertone. Nigerians show respect by standing at attention on hearing or singing the national anthem. The new national anthem was adopted in 1978. The words were put to music by the Nigerian Police Band and directed by Benedict Elise.

The Old National Anthem was in used between 1960 – 1978.

The first stanza of the old anthem was:

Nigeria we hail thee;

Our own dear native land;

Though tribe and tongue may differ;

In brotherhood we stand;

Nigerians all are proud to serve;

Our sovereign mother land.

The new national anthem is:

Arise O compatriots, Nigeria's call obey

To serve our fatherland

With love and strength and faith;

The labour of heroes past;

Shall never be in vain;

To serve with heart and might;

One nation bound in freedom, peace and unity.

Oh God of creation, direct our noble cause;

Guide Thou our leaders right;

Help our youth the truth to know;

In love and honesty to grow;

And living just and true;

Great lofty heights attain,

To build a nation where peace and justice shall reign.

Importance of National Symbols

1. To promote national unity and identity.
2. To inculcate the spirit of loyalty, patriotism and nationalism.
3. To enable Nigerians understand their diverse culture, customs and traditions.
4. To enable Nigerians build a prosperous progressive and united country.

The National Pledge

The National Pledge is an oath of allegiance to the nation. This is one of the ways in which people show their belief in and support for the nation. By reciting national pledge, Nigerians promise to support, serve and defend their country. It was written by Prof. (Mrs.) Felicia Adebola Adeyoyin in September 1976.

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I pledge to Nigeria my country;

To be faithful, loyal and honest,

To serve Nigeria with all my strength

To defend her unity and uphold her

Honour and glory

So help me God.

The National Identity Card

It is a means of identification for the citizens of Nigeria.



Picture of National Identity Card

NEEDS FOR NATIONAL UNITY, PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL INTEGRITY

Nigeria has a problem of national integration. The history of Nigeria since 1960 has included military takeovers of the government, assassinations and a destructive civil wars (1967 - 1970). Today, Nigerians are trying to put all these troubles behind them and to work together to ease the country into the modern world without destroying their traditional cultures. The problem also includes the need to foster a sense of belonging and unity in the people.

The following are some of the reasons why Nigeria should achieve national unity and integration.

1. National unity and integration will promote peace, unity and harmony in the country.
2. It will reduce conflicts. National unity and integration will reduce frequent tribal clashes and conflicts especially religious conflicts.
3. It will lay good foundation for economic and social development. Nigeria with a wider market will enable people and goods to move freely in the country and also encourage foreign investment.
4. National unity and integration will promote political development.
5. It will create good and favourable condition for progress.
6. National integration and unity will also create international relationship that will enable Nigerians to live together as brothers and sisters and as friends.
7. This will enable Nigerians to work towards the achievement or attainment of common goals.
8. It will involve Nigerians in the affairs and progress of one another and of the total society.
9. It will also promote internal movement. This will enable Nigerians to live and work anywhere in the country.

10. It will make Nigerians to work together to maintain one national identity e.g. Nigerian passport.

The NYSC scheme

The NYSC scheme was established in 1973 by the federal government of Nigeria to ensure that Nigerian young graduates are engaged in one year compulsory national service outside their geographical area. The essence is to foster national unity and appreciate the cultural diversities of the country.



Picture of a Corp Member

Unity Schools

Unity schools are also known as federal government colleges. They are located in all the states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) students are admitted into unity schools from all states of the federation. It was established to promote national unity.

Federal Character Commission

The federal character commission is a body established to ensure that the federal character principle as entrenched in the Nigerian Constitution is strictly upheld. This is to ensure that every part of the Nigerian federation is adequately represented in federal appointment e.g. the army, police, navy, federal universities, foreign missions etc. The purpose is to bring about sense of belonging and oneness.

Exercises

1. Explain what you understand by "National Consciousness".
2. Explain the meaning of the term National Identity.
3. List five national symbols.
4. List four ways of promoting national unity.