



Contextualizing organisational behaviour in anthropological diversity management for sustainable national development in Nigeria

Continue Addison Eketu

Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper elucidates issues in anthropological diversity, as it affect sustainable national development in Nigeria. The paper contextualizes this in behavioural paradigms and adopted interpretivism to construct meanings of social reality. The fundamental assumption of this approach is that social events do not share strict parametric accuracy with matter. Language, ethnicity, religion, economic life, culture, tribe, etc were identified as elements of anthropological diversity in Nigeria. The paper contended that diversity threatens cohesion, but tends to deliver greater opportunities when managed positively. The paper thus suggests 3 series of behaviour modification intervention to encourage sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: anthropological diversity, diversity management, sustainable national development, cultural anthropology

Introduction

Sustainable development has become a global mantra as it relates to responsible advancement in human quest for better living today, with posterity in mind. Several intellectual and practical efforts have been converged at national, regional, sub-regional and at continental levels to ensure that today's happy living does not destroy tomorrow's existential possibilities (Lau & Murnighan, 2010; and Jophin & Daus, 2009) ^[14, 10]. This is important because every responsible government or society must be mindful of the state of progress of the next generation. Logically, development in the next generation depends on what the present generation bequeaths to it. In the context of this thought, sustainable development has become not only a buzz, but also a challenge to governments. In fact, the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) were critical about this thought progression.

However, among the dimensions of sustainable development, Olu-Daniels, (2018) argued that social sustainability appears to be the most threatened in Nigeria. The corporate existence of Nigeria, which is a fundamental issue in its social sustainable development is resting on an unstable balance. Conflicts as threats to peace have been the most challenging factor in governance, and this tends to bear a historic status (Achebe, 1983) ^[1]. A lot of mischief that found expressions in corruption, bigotry, political conspiracies, lopsided infrastructural development, the rising of ethnic militias, change of governments, etc, all tend to bear some noticeable grudges manifesting from improper anthropological diversity management of the Nigerian state (Achebe, 1983) ^[1]. The improper handling of the anthropological diversity in Nigeria is a bulwark to social sustainability, resulting to a broad spectrum and litany of corporate deficiencies at all levels of government, and even in private business institutions.

The paper chose to use the construct anthropological diversity not only to express the foundational issues related to the divergence and convergence of social existence, but also to capture a wider range of such factors. This is necessary because a lot of factors that are related to the total

existence of man, including his physical environment contribute to build threats and opportunities for sustainable social development in Nigeria. The basic assumption propelling the thought in this paper is that, in spite the ethno-tribal and anthropological divergence and differentiation in Nigeria, sustainable social development is possible through social integration and convergence. This paper thus assumed the intellectual obligation to extricate identified issues using organizational behaviour paradigms.

The Concept of Anthropological Diversity

Anthropology is the study of the existence of man in its entirety. Thus, anthropological diversity represents the divergence and convergence of human existence. Kattak (2004) ^[11] had argued that, "anthropology confronts and ponders major questions of human existence as it explores human biological and cultural diversity in time and space". The implication of Kottak's view is that, anthropology involves digging into the intricacies of cultural diversity and everyday behaviour, and social life. Thus, the hallmark of anthropological diversity is that people live in cluster as social beings, as such "people share society – organized life in groups" (Kottak, 2004) ^[11].

This further implies that people are distinguished by their groups as cultural beings. Culture, however, is distinctively human. Humans create culture and adapt to it, as adaptability and flexibility are basic human attributes, and human diversity is crucial to multi-tribal societies.

The elements of anthropological diversity are language, religion, kinship system, culture, environment, economic life, etc. Because cultural and environmental forces constantly mold human biology and thought, it is not unexpected that people with diverse anthropological factors will behave differently. The general contention is that cultural traditions promote certain activities and abilities, discourage others, and set standards of physical well-being and attractiveness. For instance, physical activities, including sports, which are influence by culture, help build the body (Kattak, 2004; Eketu, 2018) ^[11, 7]. Anthropological diversity therefore, represents the broad and specific

differentiation or divergence between and among human societies, and which may account for divergence in their behaviours.

Anthropological Diversity in Nigeria

Nigeria is an ethno-pluralistic society with such anthropological diversity as language, tribe, religion, kinship system, pattern of economic life, and general culture. Another factor is the geographical diversity which offers different environmental opportunities, threats, and attendant influences on human behaviour. Notable tribes or ethnic groups are Hausa, Fulani, Ibo, Yoruba, Ijaw, Ibibio, Efik, Benin, Tiv, Jukun, etc. Diversity in language follows these ethno-tribal lines. The geographical diversity takes the forms of wetland, upland, rocky middle-belt, and the desert dry-land. These topographies turn to influence the economic life pattern of traditional and modern societies in Nigeria. Also the major religions- Christianity and Islam tend to bear ethno-tribal dominance, a fit that is explained away in the historic path of conquest, colonization and missionary interventions in Nigeria. Of a very broad scope is the cultural diversity in almost every aspect of socio-economic and political existence of the ethno-tribal clusters that made up Nigeria.

The practical implication of this diversity is the divergence that has more threats to, than opportunities for sustainable national development. For instance, the political aspirations and political parties emergence follow tribal lines, with political intolerance almost based on inter-tribal infractions and ethnic interests (Achebe, 1983 and Alagoa, 2016) ^[1, 2]. This has proven that a dominant challenge to governance in Nigeria is the handling of her multi-diverse anthropologies. Essentially, the political administrative order is bigotry, particularly where native names, tribal facial marks, dressing pattern, language, etc easily betray ones nativity. This has affected sense making in any issues. For instance, the definition and reasoning on corruption varies as it is impaired by tribal bigotry, as Umaru who stolen public funds is hailed in the North as a statement and at the same time castigated in the South as a thief; while James who stole public funds is celebrated as a hero in the South, but at the same time called a criminal in the North. This polarity in thought also cut across religion diversity between the major theological fraternities.

Diversity almost connotes inherent and endemic clashes of interests as it is a fundamental antecedent of conflict (Robbins, 2010; and Blumenfeld & Raymond, 2000) ^[22, 3]. Clashes of interests most of the time merely exists. Thus, because there are more than one tribal, religion, political affiliation, etc. Thus, because of multiple interests, diversity often causes discrimination, disunity between and among lines of divergence. There is often retard and unequal growth because of peculiarities. On the other hand, diversity is not all evil, it can generate synergic advantage particularly where it is well managed. Kottak (2004) ^[11] contended that a society of variety and difference tends to be stronger and resilient to withstand perturbations.

The Concept of Sustainable Social Development

Sustainable development is an eco-environmental philosophy which is a bulwark against the capitalistic tendencies to pursue profit at all cost that may be threatening to posterity. Sustainable development takes economic, social and environmental dimensions.

Sustainable social development is premised on harmonious future and peaceful co-existence as a product of present social relationship handling (Dyllick & Hockerts cited in Cella-De-Oliveira, 2013). Social sustainability involves careful handling of social impacts for future harmony. Olu-Daniels (2018) argued that social sustainability demands that the expectations of different social groups or institutions are considered. It presupposes that in the pursuit of present social gains, future social harmony should be considered as a critical agenda.

This implies that the cultivation of future or expected social capital that will engender sustainable rapid growth through careful handling of present social challenges. To achieve this, Carter (2016) argued for the adoption of core principles of sustainable development in; equity, democracy, precaution, policy integration and planning. Reflecting on the view of World Commission on the Environment and Development, Carter (2016) said that, "our inability to promote the common interest in sustainable development is often a product of the relative neglect of economic and social justice within and amongst nations", which to mind, this is the heart of inequalities. This often implies that poor, socially deprived households are the least likely to pursue sustainable consumption. On democracy, sustainable development requires a political system that serves effective citizen participation in decision making, particularly solving environmental and social problems. The principles of sustainable development are integrated to bring about lasting environmental, social and economic justice, not only between generations, but also within generations for harmonious co-existence.

Diversity Management Behaviour and Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

Diversity management has become a buzz and even more at the wake of globalization. The major challenge is not even the existence of diversity, but people world-over, are becoming more conscious of their unique identities from their sameness with others. Nevertheless, positive development in any society depends on how various factors endowed are integrated to deliver progressive outcomes rather than magnifying lines of disintegration (Horton, Leslie & Larson, 2004). It is a strong view variously expressed in Slocum & Hellriegel (2007), Kattak (2004); and Robbins & Sanghi (2010) that societies or groups, organizations with multiple diversities have stronger advantage to explore opportunities to achieve greatness. But this only becomes a reality when and where the threats of diversity are managed to explore the inherent advantages than stressing on the endowed diverse factors. Mcshane & Von Glinow (2010) argued that, "an increasing diverse workforce (society) presents both opportunities and challenges in organizations (nations)". Diversity can become a competitive advantage by improving decision making and team performance on complex tasks (Lau & Murnighan, 2010) ^[14].

Diversity management connotes the processes or programs designed to identify critical heterogeneous factors in an organization or society, and de-emphasize the negative aspects of the heterogeneity while encouraging the positive aspects through behaviour, attitudinal, and perceptual modeling. Slocum & Hellriegel (2007) argued that diversity management helps to diminish perceived incompatibility, perceived differentiation, and cultural intolerance between

homogenous clusters in the society or organization.

Robbins & Sanghi (2008) proposes training as a dominant approach to managing diversity in organizations. Diversity training increases awareness, appreciating individual or group difference, increases cross-cultural understanding, and confronting stereotypes (Ford & Fisher, 2000; and Kossek & Nobel, 2006).

Methodological Approach

This paper adopts interpretism as a means to construct meanings in the social sphere. Interpretism is rooted in subjectivism, which presupposes that humans as social behavioural beings are different from physical phenomena. This enables the interpretivist to explore and interact with social events to create richer understandings of social realities. This is akin to social constructivism (Patton, 2002; Putnam, 1975; Regin, 1994; Ndu, 2018 and Sylva, 2018).

The interpretivists believe that knowledge is socially constructed and so develop subjective meanings of their experience towards certain objects or things. As a constructionist paradigm, the assumption is that there is an interaction between the knower and the known in the process of finding truth, such that the researcher can only produce subjective interpretation of reality (Sylva, 2018; Sylva & Eketu, 2016; and Ndu, 2018).

Discussion, Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

The anthropological diversity issues related to sustainable national development in Nigeria are language, religion, economic culture, ethno-tribal, and generally socio-cultural in nature. The country is balkanized and polarized along these lines, and it has affected almost every aspect of the national corporate existence. Amongst language, religion, economic culture, ethno-tribal and socio-cultural diversities, religion, language and ethnicity has the most dominant impact. Discrimination in Nigeria follows these lines, on both public and private issues. However, because of natural endowment diversity in terms of geographical regions where the different ethnic groups are clusters, the economic culture of the ethnic groups are diversified along geographical peculiarities.

For instance, the Hausa-Fulani are dominantly pastoralists; the Igbos are industrialists and commercialists; the Ijaws engage in fisheries, lumbering industrialists, and agriculture; the Yorubas are agriculturalists and industrialist; the middle belt are agriculturalists. The violent clash between herdsmen of the Hausa-Fulani and farmers of the middle belt is a metaphor of economic-cultural diversity that the government is unable to handle. Also, the lopsided Federal Government appointments to strategic national positions is attributed to ethnic and religion bigotry, just as political alignment and affiliation follow ethno-religious domains. And the vehicle for the transmission of all these bigotry tendencies is the language diversity. Achebe (1983:25) ^[1] lamented that, "nothing in Nigeria political history captures her problem of national integration more graphically than the chequered fortune of the word tribe in her vocabulary. Conceding to the merits of national diversity, Achebe (1983:28) ^[1] argued that, "everyone agrees that there are manifestations of tribal culture which we cannot condemn, for example peculiar habits of dress, food, language, music, etc. in fact, many of these manifestations are positive and desirable and confer richness on our national culture". This

captures both the subjective and normative state of the national diversity in Nigeria.

However, drawing from the obvious intolerance amongst tribal groups, the challenge on the corporate existence of Nigeria appears to be resting on a swinging balance. Even when the government denounces US Security Reports predicting doom on national cohesiveness, some highly placed government officials often betray the sentiment of threats to other tribes, and bigotry in un-sensored public statements. The more obvious truth is that the mishandled of national diversity is a serious threat to our sustainable social development, the unavoidable implication is that sustainable national development is only attainable in the context of tolerance, mutual understanding of tribal peculiarities, and a common agreement to pursue a common goal or collective destiny despite inherent anthropological diversity.

Handling anthropological diversity to secure sustainable national development is an intricate endeavour often laced with insincerity and betrayal. But much is required, as McShane & Von Glinow (2010:181) proposed that, diversity management programs typically include interpersonal exercise because participants need to experience their subtle bases in order to correct them". Koonu (2001) contended that diversity training can be particularly helpful in accelerating cooperation in multinational and multi-tribal teams, and reducing cultural misunderstanding. Robbins & Sanghi (2008:572) demonstrated that, "diversity covers a wide variety of issues, including communicating with employee (people) whose first language isn't English. Helping a diverse team cope with conflict, learning which rewards are valued by different groups and dealing with discrimination".

Drawing from the foregoing, the study recommended series of behavior modification interventions. For public administrators:

- (a) Embrace diversity (b) Recruit broadly (c) Select fairly (d) Provide orientation and training (e) Sensitize all employees (f) Seek to motivate individually and (g) Reinforce employee differences.

The second series of the suggestions go thus:

- (b) Build community and celebrate differences (b) Heal pain and build understanding (c) solve problem on areas of conflict (d) Model a different relationship (e) take action toward political change (f) and adopt multiculturalism than assimilationist model.

In all of these, enthrone the culture of tolerance, dialogue and justice in all dealings.

The third series of suggestions include:

- (c) Equity in all dealings (b) democracy in decision making, inconclusiveness and precaution in all dealing on sustainable development.

References

1. Achebe C. An Image of Africa and the Trouble with Nigeria. London: Penguin Books Limited, 1983.
2. Alagoa EJ. A History of the Niger Delta. Port Harcourt. Doval Ventures Ltd, 2016.
3. Blumenfeld WJ, Raymond D. *Prejudice and Discrimination* in Adams, M., Blumenfeld, W.J., Castanede, R. Hackman, H.W., Peters, M.L. & Zuniga, X. (2000) Readings for Diversity and Social Justice: An Anthropology on Racism, Antisemitism, Sexism, Heterosexism, Ableism, and Classism. London: Routledge, 2000.

4. Carter N. *Understanding Sustainable Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
5. Cella De Oliveira. *Indicator of Organizational Sustainability: A Position from Organizational Competences – International Review of Management and Business Research*. 2013; 2:962-979.
6. Collins PH. *Towards a New Vision: Race, Class and gender as Categories of Analysis and Connective Readings for Diversity and Social Justice: An Anthology on Racism, Antisemitism, Sexism, Heterosexism, Ableism, and Classism*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
7. Eketu CA. *Ethno—Tribal Diversity Management in Secular Organizations in Nigeria*. *British Journal of Education and Social Sciences*. 2018; 5(10):1-7.
8. Ford JK, Fisher S. *The Role of Training in a Changing Workplace and Workforce: New Perspective and Approaches*. Blackwell Publishers, 2000.
9. Horton PB, Leslie GR, Larson RF. *The Sociology of Social Problems*. New Jersey, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
10. Jophin J, Daus UI. *The Spectre of Comparisms: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*. New York: Verso, 2009.
11. Kattak CP. *Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2004.
12. Koonce, 2001.
13. Kossek EE, Lobel SA. *Moving Toward University*. *Training* February, 2006, 44-48.
14. Lau B, Murnighan A. *Dynamic of Emerging Ethnicities: Immigrant and Indegenous Ethnogenesis in Confrontation*. New York: Peter Lang, 2010.
15. McShane SI, Von Glinow MA. *Organizational Behaviour: Emerging Realities for Workplace Revolution*. Boston: Irwin McGraw-Hill, 2010.
16. Ndu EC. *Service System Quality and Sustainable Tourism Development*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt, 2018.
17. Olu Daniel SO. *Intrapreneurial Competence and Organizational Sustainability in the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Port Harourt, 2018.
18. Patton MQ. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, C.A. Sage Publications, 2002.
19. Putnam H. *The Meaning of Meaning*. In *Mind, Language and Reality*. *Philosophical Papers*. 1975; 2:215-271.
20. Ragin C. *Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Methods*, Northwestern University, Pine forge, Thousand Oaks, D, 1994.
21. Robbins SP, Sanghi SA. *Organizational Behaviour*. New Delhi: Prentice – Hall, 2008.
22. Robbins SP. *Essentials of Organizational Behaviour*, Boston: Prentice – Hall, 2010.
23. Raymond S. *Cultural Identity and Global Process: Issues of Ethnic and Cultural Identity in the Face of globalization*. Thousand Oaks, C.A: Sage, 2000.
24. Slocum JW, Hellriegel D. *Fundamentals of Organizational Behaviour*. New Jersey: Thomson south-Western, 2007.
25. Sylva W, Eketu CA. *Solipsism in Social Inquiry: Revisiting a Redundant Paradigm*. *International Journal of Advanced Research*. 2016; 2(4):16-23.
26. Sylva W. *Management Information System Capability and Organizational Resilience of the Nigerian Aviation Industry*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt, 2018.