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ARTICLE

A review of diversity management in Nigeria: Organizational and national perspective

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Review

A review of diversity management in Nigeria: Organizational and national perspective

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This study analyses Nigeria from a socio-cultural, economic and political construct, and evaluates the concept of diversity from an organisational and national perspective to help enhance the practice of diversity management in Nigeria perspective. It focuses on multinational corporations (MNCs) and hinges on a framework developed to illustrate, as well as prompt further discussions on social related structures in Nigeria that are likely to influence how diversity is managed. This includes dominant social dimensions, state institutions referred to as stakeholders and relevant national development indicators within the discourse of managing diversity. The study majorly examines literature on the historical development of Nigeria in order to provide an in depth understanding of the national context and to unveil structural dynamics in Nigeria that embrace the need to develop diversity management practices in the country.

Key words: Nigeria, multinational corporations (MNCs), diversity management.

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Republic of Nigeria in Western Africa gained independence in 1960 after being colonised by Britain (Anyanwu, 1982). It operates on a federal, state and local government structure, and it is by far the most populous country in Africa, although estimates vary (Vreeland, 2003). A continuing population challenge faced by the country has been the unification of the 200-plus ethnic groups and cultures identified within its borders (Udogu, 2005). This diverse characteristic raises debates (Ekanade, 2012; Danladi, 2013) on the relevance of one system of law throughout the nation and the imposition of English as the official language, which has contributed to supplanting local loyalties with the 'feeling

of being Nigerian'. Hence, the ethnic challenge undoubtedly significantly impacts the socio-economic and political stability of the nation, and the government has for many years tried to use the 'feeling of brotherhood' to combat hostility among diverse societies (Agundu et al., 2007).

From an economic context, there are key factors that define the country's economy, including oil and gas, agriculture, mining and manufacturing; however, oil has been the most imperative discourse (Thisdaylive, 2014). According to the former gross domestic product (GDP) records, three major sectors - agriculture, crude oil and gas, and trade accounted for about 85% of

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GDP. Nevertheless, in recent times, agriculture, oil and gas, and trade account for 54% of Nigerian output. Sectors that increased in estimates of their shares in GDP include telecommunications, real estate manufacturing, construction and entertainment (World Bank, 2014). In spite of these records, the economic struggle of the nation has been linked to poor management of resources, corruption, ethnic disputes, religious and political unrest, which are interpreted as underdevelopment within various sectors in the nation (Agundu et al., 2007). For instance, Asiedu (2002, 2006) highlights corruption as an institutional variable that obstructs development and is a deterrent to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Nigerian society. In addition, the government's inability to enforce and monitor contracts issued for development planning and the political instability in the nation stand as variables restricting the growth of FDI in Nigeria. In line with such institutional struggles preventing development, Agundu et al. (2007) argue that development is a sustainable process of good governance and socio-economic progress that 'has the integrity, well-being and security of the individual and society at its core'. Hence, Nigeria needs a practical democratisation process that encourages the development of its policies and economy (Agundu et al., 2007). This can also include the reconstruction of current Nigerian state systems like the political, social and economic structures.

This echoes the fact that these systems are likely to intersect as well as function independently. For instance, Anyanwu (1982) and Frynas (1998) affirm that the level of education and the complexities of ethnic groups intersect with the disposition of government agents and the perception of politics by Nigerian citizens. This gives one the opportunity to understand better the political setbacks that restrict economic distribution and development in the country. In contrast, Frynas (1998) argues that this instability has not been a hindrance for business, as several businesses including MNCs still operate effectively in Nigeria. The obvious evidence of these systems intersecting as discussed earlier again validates the need to explore critically social factors that affect the nation. This introduces the analysis of Nigeria through a feminist lens that integrates other social practices.

Analysing the Nigerian state through a feminist lens, Agundu et al. (2007) argue that education and freedom of expression and association are rights that all, in spite of differences, should have. Focusing on gender inequalities, various non-governmental agencies, like Women's International Network (WID), the Nigerian government and the United Nations are working to promote gender equality (Omoweh, 2003) through various initiatives; for example, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). A key focus of NEPAD is to eradicate gender differences in the educational system in the country (Omoweh, 2003).

This again affirms the fact that there is significant attention on gender as a national social concern in Nigeria, as is the case in Western states (Buck and James, 2005; Women's Conference, 2010). Likewise, the patriarchal structure in Nigerian society automatically positions gender power relations of men over women. This is reflected at the national, state and local levels of the country. From a cultural perspective, although gender differences have a positive side in relation to family structuring, this has been abused, leading to women being and feeling oppressed (Ekanade, 2012). Furthermore, these abuses of gender power relations have left women out of opportunities that exist for men. These opportunities include access to health and education as well as high-profile jobs (Ajala and Alonge, 2013).

Consequently, right from its inception Nigeria as a nation has suffered conflicts created by the poor supervision of gender related issues and other socio-cultural factors like, ethnicity and religion (Abdulwahab, 2012). This social dissatisfaction has been expressed in arguments (Ajala and Alonge, 2013) and debates (Sahara Reporters, 2014) that have challenged the structure of the Nigerian state set by the colonial government pre-independence. In spite of these debates (Sahara Reporters, 2014), the Nigerian structure has remained the same and has led to a state of continuous dialogue on 'what should be'.

From the foregoing critical analysis, it is expedient to highlight that the current socio-cultural, political and economic structures support the need for a national system or systems that promote unity. However, the current layout opposes the reality of achieving democratisation process and national development. Hence, this study somewhat examines the current socio-cultural formations in Nigeria. Diagram 1 highlights four features that underpin discussions on the Nigerian environment.

Dominant social identities in Nigeria

Dominant social identities emphasises that an individual's social identity establishes him/her in a social group where other individuals of his/her kind exhibit similar social characteristics (Hogg et al., 1995; Burke, 2006). In Nigeria, various social identities that categorise individuals with similar cultural characteristics include family background, education, employment status, disability and sexual orientation.

However, dominant social identities recognised in Nigerian society include gender, ethnicity and religion and often embrace others like class, political affiliation and age. These dominant social identities are socio-cultural characteristics that take precedence in various parts of Nigeria (Ikpe, 2009). Nevertheless, it is important to note that these social identities could vary from state to

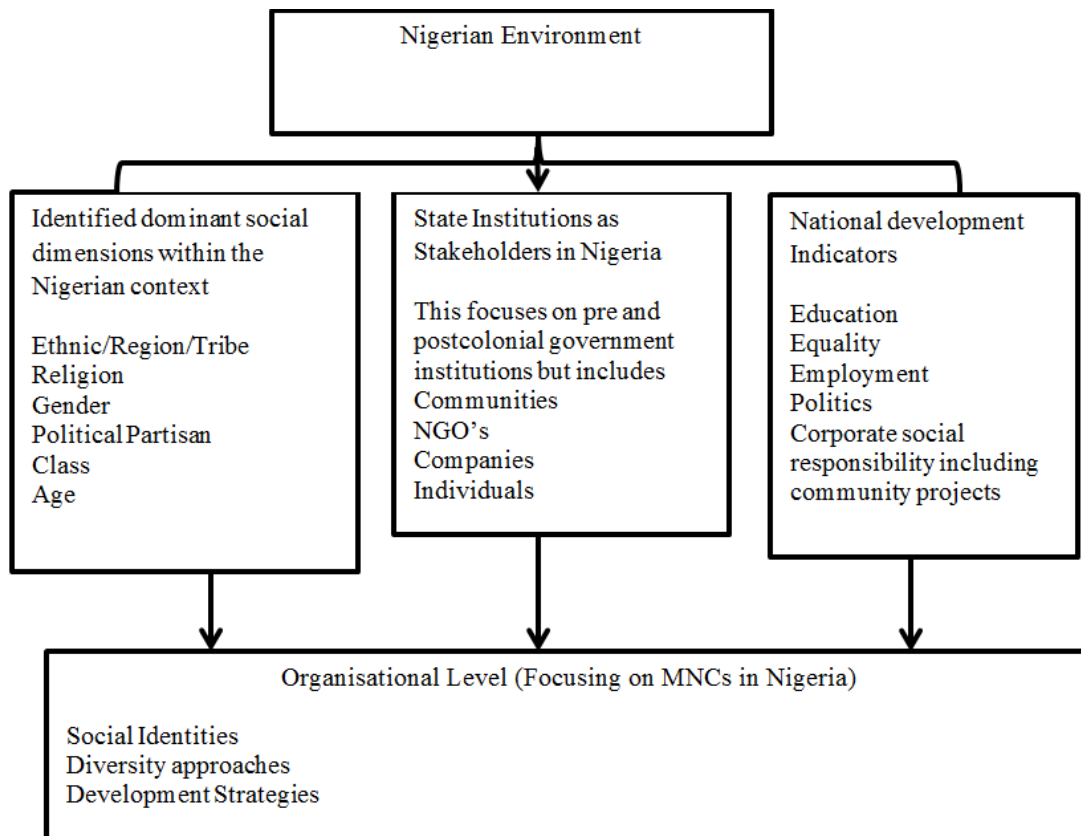


Diagram 1. 1 the Nigerian Environment (Source: Loliya Akobo, 2016).

state or between regions and are likely to intersect in the Nigerian context.

In spite of the substantial evidence of the effect of these social identities on the socio-economic and political strata in Nigeria (Ajala and Alonge, 2013; United Nations, 2014), constructive initiatives focusing on social identities at the national level have yet to be effectively implemented. The lack of these constructive initiatives intensifies the need to develop and implement policies on tolerance and respect for social categories represented in the society. In addition, because of the concurrent use of the terms diversity management and equal opportunity, diversity management is positioned as a means to promote justice and equal opportunities among social groups, as well as improve the livelihoods of minorities identified in society and organisations (Nyambegera, 2002).

Nonetheless, from the British council report on development projects in Nigeria which highlights substantial policies with no implementation power, it can be said that these development processes in Nigeria currently lacks the implementation and monitoring power that ensures effectiveness and substantial outcomes from a national perspective (British Council Nigeria, 2012). In light of these challenges, it is essential to conceptualize diversity management in Nigeria to enhance the use and

effectiveness of this relevant process. In order to help unveil the complexity of diversity management in Nigeria, this study explores ethnicity, religion and politics, gender, age, class and political partisan (affiliation) in Nigeria. These social dimensions shape the current thinking on dominant social dimensions and their intersecting complexities in the Nigerian context, this is based on the predominant social discourse in the Nigerian national systems (Oguntola-Lauda, 2008; Ekanade, 2012; United Nations, 2012; Mudiare, 2013; Olurode, 2013) (Diagram 2).

Ethnic influence in Nigeria

Ethnicity as a social signifier in the Nigerian context is associated generally with a sense of belonging based on the awareness of having a common language, culture, belief, and history setbacks experienced in sub-Saharan Africa that hinder growth and development. These setbacks manifest in situations where strong loyalties for ethnic tribe tend, in some way, to impact negatively on the growth and development of the 'larger society', which comprises various ethnic groups. In Nigeria, for instance, ethnic loyalties lead to conflicts when political allocations apparently do not favour a particular ethnic tribe or region

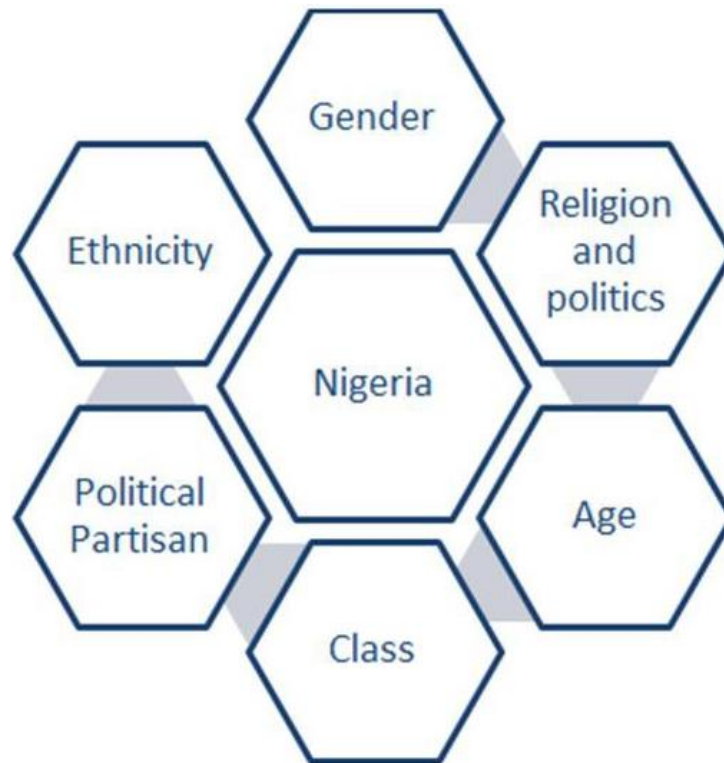


Diagram 2. Dominant Social Identities in Nigeria (source: Loliya Akobo, 2016).

(Odiegwu et al., 2012). Likewise, budgets for the national income gained from natural resources have stirred up ethnic conflicts in Nigeria (Ekanade, 2012). Thus, some ethnic groups express concerns about inequality as they experience treatments they perceive to be unfair (Rhuks, 2012).

As observed from literature of Hino et al. (2012), ethnic issues in Nigeria and other African states before the colonial era were resolved through traditional structured systems that were part of the cultural structures of the social groups. However, the current ethnicity dialogue in Nigeria has been associated with the geographical structural partition of the society. This dialogue goes as far back as the days of the British colonial government (Ekanade, 2012). This structuring was established for easy governance by the British colonial rule (Ekanade, 2012), they merged political divisions of the country along the lines of the three main ethnic tribes (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba); hence, the political parties were strongly ethnically driven (Akinboye and Anifowoshe, 1999). This key administrative structure, however, did not consider the cultural differences of the ethnic groups and the likelihood of the desire for power resulting in ethnic-political conflicts in the near future (Akinboye and Anifowoshe, 1999; Nyambegera, 2002). For instance, the long-standing recognition of three ethnic zones in Nigeria was oblivious of the fact that other ethnic groups would later rise up and seek equal recognition, allocation of

resources and political positions at the federal and state levels (Obi, 2001).

This rising ethnic divide enhances the sensitivity of 'tribalism', which cannot be ignored. Tribal patriotism incorporates the belief that 'having one's own kind' in power will lead to the ethnic group benefiting from the nation's resources (Nyambegera, 2002). The interchanging use of these words is also in relation to the state division of Nigeria since independence. This notion however overlooks the relevance of having capable persons with knowledge and experience holding political positions to achieve national growth and development (Hino et al., 2012). With this thought on the impact of 'tribalism' in the Nigerian context, it is significant to analyse the influence of ethnicity among workforce relations even within MNCs (Azolukwam and Perkins, 2009).

Gender discourse in Nigeria

The recognition of gender relations highlights the relevance of the feminist approach of this thesis as a foundation for social concerns in Nigeria. This gender dialogue includes campaigns to empower women to participate in and benefit the nation. These national policies and programmes in Nigeria are affiliated to international strategies for eradicating gender inequality

(United Nations, 2014). Gender discussions in Nigeria essentially focus on education. At the basic (primary) level of education in Nigeria, female school attendants are lower than males (Ajala and Alonge, 2013). This disparity is worse in some parts of Nigeria (United Nations, 2012). Linking this to marginalisation of women in Africa, some identified indicators that contribute to this marginalisation include violence and harmful traditional practices, lack of basic human rights, and lack of access to education, health and employment opportunities (World Bank, 2012).

Similarly, a number of factors that affect women in Nigeria include poverty, child labour, religious practices that support early marriage, illiteracy and other socio-cultural values that promote gender inequality (Ajala and Alonge, 2013). Elaborating on the socio-cultural values includes the expectation on women to perform domestic roles, which sometimes alienates her from opportunities available to men. Enlightened parents avoid discrimination against female education and empowerment. This has also helped to increase the number of females in education and supported empowerment initiatives in Nigeria; however, because of the still significantly lower number of women in education, organisations face the challenge of ensuring a gender balance in relation to employing more women and positioning them in top management roles. This is especially the case for organisations and multinationals in science and technology related fields as highlighted within literature on STEMM; indicating a shortage of women in science, technology, engineering, medicine and mathematics fields of study (Penny et al., 2014).

In light of the aforementioned challenges, it is pertinent to state that the legislative framework encourages gender balance. However, the lack of enforcement of these policies reinforces the reality of discriminatory processes for women's education at the primary, secondary and higher education levels, especially in the Northern part of Nigeria (World Bank, 2012). In spite of this setback, it is still evident that there are several awareness programmes (Ajala and Alonge, 2013) such as conferences, seminars and workshops organised by the government, government sponsored agencies, organisations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and charity organisations to encourage female education and empowerment. This however, still needs strong support from the state institutions, to promote adherence to these policies by corporations and agencies. Alongside gender and ethnic issues (Ekanade, 2012), systems in the Nigerian social structure exhibit religious and political influences as highlighted by Oguntola- Laguda, (2008) who argues that this intersections of religious and political influences emerged from the formation of the nation on a political compromise between a predominantly Muslim North and largely Christian South. These intersections are key factors that affect social relations in the Nigerian context.

Religion and politics in Nigeria

As earlier mentioned, the intersection of religion and politics in Nigeria dates back pre independence when the North was merged with the South of Nigeria in spite of the religious divides (Oguntola- Laguda, 2008). However, even after independence, this divide has become more prominent and significant because of the increase in converts to both Islam and Christianity from traditional practices. Similarly, the continued power-sharing leadership that shifts policy emphasis between the North and the South encourages this social divide. Regardless of this already existing challenge, new challenges have emerged as the Nigerian state now comprises North, East and West regions and six geo-political zones.

Another key challenge that integrates religion and politics is in relation to the regional tension caused by oil and energy revenues and allocations (Oguntola-Laguda, 2008). This is because of the amalgamation of the North and South protectorates (Sahara Report, 2014) that built a policy structure through which the South subsidized the North. This policy however did not change alongside other socio-cultural, economic and socio-political changes that occurred after independence, hence triggering an imbalance in the resource allocation process against the economically vibrant South (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004). In contrast, there is an argument (Oguntola-Laguda, 2008) that religion should be separate from politics, especially since both factors belong to different realms of existence (Oguntola-Laguda, 2008). However, this is not given in the current Nigerian construct that recognises the challenges of this union but neglects its consequences for the purpose of 'vested interest' (Thisdaylive, 2014).

Aside from the intersection of religion with politics, religion in Nigeria also intersects with other social dimensions like ethnicity and gender power structures. For instance, the recent religious-political conflicts in Nigeria have led to the death of many, kidnappings of a substantial number of school girls, and displacement of women and other minorities in the Northern part of Nigeria (The Independent, 2014). These persistent conflicts in Nigeria with respect to the socio-cultural and political influences amongst social categories like religion, politics, ethnicity, again show the complexity of the Nigerian state. Likewise, other social categories that are noteworthy include class, age and political partisanship, as discussed below.

Class, age and political partisanship

As earlier mentioned, other dominant social dimensions identified in Nigeria include class, age and political affiliation. The established colonial administrative structure is said to have aided development of the strong class structures and misuse of power that exist currently

in Nigeria (Duke, 2010). This governmental structure legalised a strong central control that individuals or groups of people have, over time, abused. Arguably, this abuse of power increases the social struggle for the control of resources and political positioning, as government offices and projects are used as means of wealth accumulation for individuals and groups (Joseph, 1983). From an organisational perspective, this is likely to impact differently, but may result in the same effect of social marginalisation. Consequently, empirical study carried out; using semi structured interviews of 34 respondents from 2 large MNCs in Nigeria, showed that dominant social dimensions in the workplace are not completely different from dominant social identities recognized within a national context. This is also supported by literature (Hofstede, 1991; Werner and DeSimone, 2006) that cultural positioning in diversity discussions is a representation of different cultural attributes by more than one individual in a place.

Reviewing the age dimension in Nigeria reveals a growing interest in 'ageing' as a social problem. This social concern relates to health, employment, education, politics and government provision of wellbeing for all age groups (Mudiare, 2013). For instance, the 'early marriage' religious practice in the Northern part of Nigeria contributes to female mortality rate because of poor health and early childbirth (World Bank, 2012). This further leads to the high level of female exclusion from various education programmes, which again reveals intersection of age, gender and religion in the Nigerian context. Examining the age structure based on the 1999 census (Mudiare, 2013), this shows a large proportion of children and young persons, which is a mixture of economically active and non-economically active age distribution.

For the economically active group, the high proportion of youth aged 18 to 35 (Fajana, 2009) further reflects the employment challenge the country currently faces as there is a likely decline of some age group amongst the workforce (Owoyemi et al., 2011). In addition, study conducted by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics revealed that the average school leaving age in 1980s and 1990s were between ages 25 to 28. This was attributed to the limited number of education institutions at the time (Owoyemi et al., 2011). However, from 1999 until date, new universities both (public and private) have been established estimating to over 120 degree awarding institutions (Owoyemi et al., 2011). This rise positively and negatively affects age diversity, as there is a larger number of talent pool and employers tend to show preference for the job applicant with average age of 20 to 39. This can also account for differences in observed workplace behaviours as empirical study shows that the organisations have a record of retained staff with average age of 40 to 50. From the foregoing analysis, due to corporations' dependence on national human capital (due to regulations and requested quotas for employment and

development of nationals) and the behavioural consequence as a result of age differences in the workplace, it is therefore necessary for MNCs to pay attention to age diversity amongst workforce in order to avoid age related conflicts amongst its staff especially in a country like Nigeria where age plays a significant role with in relation to the concept of respect (Owoyemi et al., 2011).

The case of political partisanship in Nigeria clearly centres on regionalisation and ethnicity as previously mentioned. Nonetheless, over the years, this dimension has come to intersect with other factors like religion and social class. Therefore, political partisanship as a dominant diversity dimension in Nigeria connects to ethnic, regional, religious and social class constructs and patriotism. Consequently, though Nigerians shy away from politics because of experienced negative attributes like bias (Ojo, 2012), Nigerians hold a strong connection to their heritage and would therefore pledge allegiance to a party, or a party ideology, because of its socio-cultural ties.

Similarly, intersecting political partisanship with gender through positive propaganda to involve women in politics is increasingly a way to establish gender balance between the male and female sex (United Nations, 1976; Brownill and Halford, 1990; UN Women, 1995; 2010). In support of this notion, the Nigerian constitution gives men and women the right to democratic governance; it promotes equality and prohibits discrimination against any citizen on any ground. This has somewhat increased the number of women participating in politics. In spite of the increase, only a limited number of women held political positions in the 2007 and 2011 elections (Olurode, 2013; Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013).

Due to these inconsistent results on women in politics, many interventions by various stakeholders including state institutions and corporations aim to promote gender equality, including in politics (Nwoye, 2007). This involvement has again expounded the relevance of political partisanship as a dominant social dimension in Nigeria. It is therefore significant to examine what the case is from an organisation's perspective.

From the foregoing discussions, the existence and obvious intersections of dominant diversity dimensions in Nigeria affirms that Nigeria has a dynamic socio-cultural construction that affects stakeholders like individuals, social groups, corporations and state institutions. The next section will explore these characters with a focus on state institutions in Nigeria.

State institutions as stakeholders in the Nigerian society

As shown in Diagram 1 stakeholders in Nigeria revolve around individuals, companies, communities, and pre- and post-colonial government institutions (Abdulwahab, 2012). Nonetheless, this section aims to focus more on

the structure and role of government agencies as strategic stakeholders in Nigeria. This is with respect to the fact that the social frameworks of individuals and other stakeholders derive from the socio-cultural power relations of the society that continuously affects their social realities (Abdulwahab, 2012).

The Nigerian state comprises 36 states and six geo-political zones: North Central States, North East States, North West States, South East States, South South States and South West States (Odiegwu et al., 2012). As highlighted by Odiegwu et al. (2012), the present perception of the six geo-political zones is ethnically determined. Additionally, the government institutions in Nigeria are divided into local, state and national levels. The functions of the government institutions are to ensure development and effective democratic governance at all levels (Gboyega, 1999). This institutional divide was initially done by the British colonial administration as a form of indirect rule (Gboyega, 1999; Sahara Reporters, 2014). From a historical context, it is important to mention colonial rule in Nigeria in order to understand the role of individuals, groups and institutions in the Nigerian state.

As highlighted by African researchers (Akinboye and Anifowoshe, 1999; Obi, 2001; Odiegwu et al., 2012), the 'divide and rule system' Ojo (2012) established during the colonial rule era led to the establishment of a new elite of nationalists who, according to Abdulwaha (2012), were more interested in a scheme for power than reform. This form of rule led after independence consistently to 'ethnic, religious and geographical wars amongst nationals in Nigeria'. Supporting this argument is the existence of social class in governance. These classes influence the Nigerian institutional structure, which runs a patrimonial system (Osoba, 1996). This is where a leader gives offices and benefits to subordinates who, in turn, pledge their allegiance (Ikpe, 2009). The consequence is the observed reality of the existing social classes/groups that seek personal interests (Thisdaylive, 2014) while in positions of power, accommodated by the distribution of resources and services that are controlled by a specific few. Moreover, as described by Abdulwahab (2012), this has propagated development concerns relating to under-employment, unemployment, inequality, lack of adequate education and infrastructure in Nigeria, and has further formed the notion that there is a struggle for justice between individuals and the state, further stressing that this struggle for social justice is principally between dominant powerful groups and the rest of the society.

Over the years and through various political dispensations, government institutions have been a means of directly meeting the needs of the people at various levels to ensure development (Dibie, 2004). These development activities include the training and development of community members, community and inter-governmental relations, and the implementation of projects at the local and state community levels (Agundu et al., 2007). State level in this context refers to

institutional systems that are in place within a state to ensure the development and safety of citizens and foreigners existing in the state; this includes the feeling of belonging and entitlement as individuals seek the right to socio-economic wellbeing (Akpan, 2009; Cornwall et al., 2011).

With individuals seeking to have a sense of belonging in a state, they have in some cases been highly pressured to pledge loyalty to social groups like ethnic sets, religious bodies, political parties and charitable organisations (Akpan, 2009). This allegiance has further promoted the strong presence of social relations and its impact on national institutional demeanours in Nigeria (Akpan, 2009). This can be argued to have either a negative or positive influence on individuals and society. Nevertheless, it is necessary that national policies seek appropriate ways to ensure this works for, and not against, development reforms in Nigeria. Therefore, it is almost a futile effort to detach social relations from institutional constructs when considering social-cultural transformation in Nigeria, as it also seems futile to isolate individuals from the state (Adebanwi and Obadare, 2010).

In agreement with the foregoing argument, Adebanwi and Obadare (2010) highlight the concept of how leaders mould institutions at the birth of politics. Nevertheless, institutions are required, in turn, to mould leaders towards organised democratisation processes. At the organisational level, individuals employed by an organisation are likely to interact with other colleagues as a result of social similarities. Nevertheless, in reality there are cultural differences as multiple minds and talents are available to bring about competitive advantage, higher performance and social conflicts. The organisation, therefore, seeks to restrict negative conflicts relating to social relations by implementing various strategies to manage the diverse workforce (Otusanya, 2011). These strategies as highlighted in Diagram 3 include mentorship programmes, women support centers within the corporation, confidentiality counselling for staff who feel they have been treated unfairly. In light of these efforts by organisations to curb conflicts, it is therefore, necessary to review organizational level of managing diversity, using MNCs as case.

National development in the Nigerian context

National development in the Nigerian context explores means by which national development planning can occur. In Nigeria, the government recognises the significance of education as a tool for achieving national objectives, for a free and democratic society, a just and democratic society, a united, strong and self-sufficient nation, a great and vibrant economy and a land with great opportunities for all nationals (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004). This national development plan is in line

Diversity Dimension	Actions
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ensure targeted monitoring processes for females with high potential marginalisation -Establish special career training courses for females. -Provide crèches at all office locations. - Ensure paid maternity leave, -Promote women's network, and corporate sponsorship of the women's organisation
Ethnic/Tribal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Encourage Nigerianisation policy'. -Maintenance of a minimum expat policy. -Focuses on recruiting more staff from the Niger Delta region. -Support university recruitment programmes that span all regions in Nigeria
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Encourage sponsorship of football and choral competitions to help promote age bonding among all levels of staff. -Increases brand awareness amongst youths within the organisation. -Sponsor young organisations professional network and actively promote mentorship programmes
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Promotes Religious Acceptance -Provide prayer places for Muslims as their religion require frequent prayer times, -Accept specific dress or religious accoutrement, -Both organisations comply with national religious holidays (both Christian and Muslim) dates -Allow Flexitime

Diagram 3. Strategies by MNCs focusing on Social Groups (Source Loliya Akobo 2016: developed from empirical results).

with other African states. However, the educational system constantly faces difficulties, in spite of many established reforms, in transforming the educational system to meet the nation's national development objectives (Idogho et al., 2012). These reforms include the establishment of universal basic education, launched in 1999 and which took effect from 2004 (Okujagu, 2013). This scheme intended to aid in the remodelling of the basic education sector in Nigeria and was structured to eradicate 'illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as to stimulate and accelerate national development in the country'. This goal has led to positive strides, as there has been a recorded increase in the number of children admitted into public schools, and an increase in the number of private schools approved over the years (National Planning Commission, 2007).

The goals for education in Nigeria seek to create a national consciousness amongst the population as well as to train Nigerians to be principled, respectful of one another, to understand the world, acquire appropriate

skills and develop oneself. This shows the country's awareness that the development of its people and the placing of the right people in the right job roles help to aid organisational and national development (Gyang, 2011). In addition, although there has been recorded improvement in the provision of basic education, especially for children (National Planning Commission, 2007), some major factors that have affected the educational system in the Nigerian context include the population size, gender imbalance, ethnic and religious constructs. In relation to a rising population, this implies that the numbers of school age children, for both male and female students, is rising (Okujagu, 2013). For example, at the higher (university) education level, statistics show that the supply for education is unable to meet demand (Idogho et al., 2012).

Other factors that pose a threat to meeting the national development objectives include infrastructural and academic staff deficiency, labour market setbacks, inadequate public funding including the payment of staff

in government owned universities, economic constraints, and access to university. A cap system policy established by the National University Commission regulates how many people any university in Nigeria can admit each year (Federal Ministry of Education, 2009). These challenges have, in their own way, contributed to the slow growth towards human resource development in the nation.

Additionally, while it is evident that there is an increase in the number of nationals accepted to higher education (National Bureau of Statistics, 2014), there is also the challenge of gender balance in relation to the number of males and females attending university in some geo-political zones. This also includes the number of women obtaining degrees perceived unconsciously as male dominated fields (National Planning Commission, 2007).

In line with this, a survey carried out by the National Bureau of Statistics (2014) showed that at the post-secondary level in both urban and rural areas, the ratio of male to female attendance is 79.2 to 20.8%.

The Millennium Development Goals established by the United Nations and approved by the Nigerian government sought to address these deficits in relations to education, gender, and equality and poverty (National Planning Commission, 2007). This recorded significant but low outcomes especially in relation to the outcomes within various regions in Nigeria (NMDG, 2010). The high level of inequality in the Nigerian system is one visible underlying factor that has contributed to the unstable social, economic and political situation in the country. It is, therefore, one strong reason the Nigerian government joins forces with international agencies like the United Nations to address these diversity related issues in order to achieve the human development goals. In addition, the National Planning Commission (2007) highlights that gender disparity in education is a key factor in achieving gender balance in the political arena both at the local and state levels. Analysing the need for growth and expansion from an organisational perspective, the concern of organisations to continuously be competitive, implement knowledge and proficiency, meet client needs, and satisfy organisational goals has created the need for human capital development or revolution (Benjamin and David, 2012). Diversity management has therefore been adopted as a necessary innovative tool by MNCs.

Organisational level focusing on MNCs in Nigeria

Although multinationals are foreign private investors in Nigeria that promote capital development, they often act as major development institutions in the parts of Nigeria where they operate (Otusanya, 2011). However, it has been argued that MNCs operating in host countries, as is the case in Nigeria, under-report profits and look for various means to evade huge tax payments (Otusanya, 2011).

This avoidance hinges on the need to make higher profits from host countries. Otusanya (2011) further describes this as an anti-social trait that nationals and international stakeholders partake for personal financial gain. However, this activity is a detriment to the national development of the host country. Similarly, Singh (2011) argues that MNCs have enjoyed socio-economic benefit in Nigeria; hence, this could be a strong reason for their long-term operation and business ties despite the obvious political instability affecting the Nigerian economic markets. Examining the perception of MNCs operating in Nigeria has created the opportunity to highlight obvious advantages and disadvantages. In a positive light, the probability of MNCs acting as role models for other corporations in Nigeria could develop into partnerships that evolve into global collaborations. Nonetheless, it cannot be overlooked that some companies not seeking global expansion could see this as the MNCs gaining competitive advantage; thereby making it almost impossible for them to thrive against those MNCs.

Another impact of MNCs in Nigeria has been that they substitute for government institutions. Some communities local to where they operate perceive them as the 'government of the day' (Otusanya, 2011). This role trade-off of multinational corporations and the government institutions in Nigeria further establishes setbacks in the governance of the nation, as MNCs take a more proactive approach in development planning. In this, I refer to development projects organized by governments, through the local representatives, in collaboration with MNCs and other non-governmental agencies. As highlighted in the study of Renouard and Lado (2012) these projects are most often than not in the case of Nigeria, solely left for the MNCs operating within a community. Thereby, creating the debate as to what should be done by the government vs the MNCs operating within a community (Frynas, 2005; Renouard and Lado, 2012). In addition, other stakeholders who engage in these proactive roles in partnership with the government include NGOs and international agencies like the United Nations (Renouard and Lado, 2012).

For MNCs, this development approach takes the form of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) dialogue or community development initiatives (Frynas, 2005). According to Frynas (2005), the growing perception about CSR especially carried out by MNCs is that it can have either positive or negative outcomes. For instance, the oil industry in Nigeria has, over the years, stirred ethnic conflicts and disputes between the federal government, states and host communities in relation to ownership and allocation of benefits (Rhuks, 2012).

On a direct level with host communities, literature (Tobey and Perera, 2012) shows that MNCs operating in a given community are likely to partake in these deliberations as well as enhance the community crises through negligence. In addition, the MNCs also carry out

activities that meet local needs. These needs range from providing infrastructure to providing educational training (local training or scholarships) for indigenes (nationals). This is to enable sustainable operation and exploitation of oil resources in the community (Rhuks, 2012). In spite of the community related projects, revenue allocations and taxes allocated to the state institutions, MNCs are perceived to magnify gender, income, regional and sector-based inequalities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (Renouard and Lado, 2012) as they pay staff higher than other corporations in the region. These arguments (Otusanya, 2011; Renouard and Lado, 2012; Rhuks, 2012) on the roles and influence of MNCs in the Nigerian context are comparable to the debates on MNCs in host countries. However, the positive qualities introduce their capability to act as development agencies in the Nigerian context.

National development and diversity management

The foregoing discussion on national development planning in Nigeria revealed education as a major development indicator by which national development objectives are endorsed. Following this, the idea of diversity management in the Nigerian context seeks to promote culture, esteem and value differences as well as support equality for all. Likewise, MNCs promote diversity management internally and externally, but externally through CSR initiatives. These are referred to as community engagements by the MNCs. These include building local economies through support for SMEs, innovation, and engaging with local communities through employing community indigenes, empowering community members by promoting education and sensitization programmes (Agundu et al., 2007).

Therefore, it is pertinent to examine the relationship between diversity management and national development planning in Nigeria by examining education in Nigeria and the MNC's CSR processes. These processes include other relevant social systems that exist as strategic processes for national development in the Nigerian society (Duke, 2010). They are equality and opportunities for all, employment and socio-economic processes, a stable political structure, and community development (National Planning Commission, 2007; Benjamin and David, 2012; Renouard and Lado, 2012; Tobey and Perera, 2012). Consequently, Diagram 1 highlights national development indicators in the Nigerian context.

From the education context, the influence of the intersecting social relations paradigms, like religion and ethnic beliefs, narrated in previous discussion and debates (Duke, 2010; Okujagu, 2013), promotes gender inequality at all levels of the education structure - the primary secondary and tertiary (Omoweh, 2003), and as retrieved from country and education vital statistics and

World education news and reviews (UNICEF, 2013; WENR, 2013), these statistics show a rise in female attendants but still less than males especially in the Northern part of Nigeria (Ajala and Alonge, 2013). As a result, government agencies, non-governmental institutions, the United Nations and the World Bank have sought ways to eradicate this inequality and to promote equal opportunities for both the girls/female and boys/male genders (Idogho et al., 2012). In relation to the employment and socio-economic context, the system in most Nigerian corporations is highly controlled and little or no effort is made towards promotion and growth, especially for higher managerial and technical roles (Duke, 2010). Individuals who attain these managerial positions in most corporations work hard at knowing the right people to enhance the process for career progression.

In addition, because of the paternal system and the existence of social groups for personal gain, gender imbalance is likely to lead to unfair treatment and poor allocation of resources to women and other minority groups (Obi, 2001; World Bank, 2012). This significantly affects economic growth in Nigeria, as human capacity development is limited because access to resources is restricted to a selected few (Duke, 2010; Abdulwahab, 2012). Furthermore, we cannot ignore the conflicts created by ethnic disputes due to unfair treatment in resource allocation and the lack of basic amenities from the national to state and local levels. Concurrently, literature shows that the unrest created by ethnic and religious conflicts significantly impacts on the Nigerian economy (Nyambegera, 2002).

Reviewing the socio-political context, the colonial administrators mainly created a system of enforced rule (Duke, 2010). This pattern of leadership continued post-independence and further led to the establishment of strong political parties that predominantly promote the agenda of government stakeholders rather than that of citizens (Ekanade, 2012). In relation to seeking gender and ethnic balance in the political systems, the Nigerian state institutions established an allocation system for the geo-political zones, ethnic societies and women. This was through allocating offices and seats to them at the federal, state and local levels of government (Ekanade, 2012). However, because allegations made against women in leadership roles including perceived corruption (Ekanade, 2012), there was a downplay of women's ability to stand as effective leaders, thereby increasing gender imbalance as women were replaced by their male counter parts (Agundu et al., 2007; Ekanade, 2012). Though corruption has been a concern within systems in Nigeria (Ekanade, 2012), its consistent link to women in government promotes a negative perception of women in power. Therefore, it is relevant to monitor and manage diversity concerns as they intersect with politics and gender to ensure stability and advancement of human resource development in Nigeria.

From a corporate social responsibilities (CSR) perspective, community development in developing countries is mainly embedded within CSR or corporate citizenship. As earlier mentioned, this is widely recognised as a strategy used by MNCs to retain their significance and ensure a favourable environment in which they can achieve maximum expected profit without interruption (Muthuri and Gilbert, 2011). In this paper, I have examined CSR or corporate citizenship as a means by which MNCs manage social relations in order to achieve national development. This has been through diversity management strategies as highlighted in Diagram 1 and CSR initiatives carried out externally especially towards empowering social groups in the host community (Idemudia, 2011).

In addition, from the foregoing analysis it can be agreed that MNCs are likely to face concerns shaped by ethnic, religious and political conflicts. Hence, these corporations are required to be conscious of the environment in which they operate, and seek ways to assist in managing these conflicts. The existence of organisations in social structures (Ioannou and Serafeim, 2012), and the division of labour between government and businesses – in this case MNCs – is the basis for the move towards CSR (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011).

Valente and Crane (2010) developed a framework of four strategies for CSR, which include the provision of services to communities, and supporting or substituting for the government role in community development. These social services include education, economic welfare, infrastructure development and environmental protection (Muthuri and Gilbert, 2011). This further fosters the ideology of positioning MNCs as key drivers to promote diversity management for national development through corporate citizenship or CSR. However, shaping diversity management in Nigeria cannot be left to the MNCs as it is evident all stakeholders have a major part to play in the growth and effectiveness of this much needed development concept.

CONCLUSION

It has been established that the formation of the Nigerian state is an amalgamation of states with strong cultural values exhibited in various existing social relations that make up and influence the state systems (Azolukwam and Perkins, 2009). Likewise, Singh (2011) highlights that regions represented in Nigeria are due to ethnic and other social grounds.

However, in spite of these unique values and differences, the uniting of these states for easy governance under colonial rule has remained the foundation of the post-independence structure in current Nigeria (Sahara Reporters, 2014). Following independence, the reason for sustaining the amalgamation of states remained the creation of a

nationalist system comprised of ethnically homogenous individuals seeking democracy and self-governance (Ekanade, 2012). However, the challenge has been consolidating the contemporary Nigeria by creating social policies to guide the relationship between socially motivated individuals that make up the nation's structure. Therefore, it is viable to say that the concept of diversity from a Nigerian perspective is associated with the social differences evident in the otherwise ethnically somewhat homogenous population (Nyambegera, 2002).

In an attempt to appreciate diversity in Nigeria from a historical perspective, it is right to say that the origin of diversity in Nigeria is ethnically and regionally determined, as established in the foregoing analysis. This is because the national identification approach for individuals is significantly according to their ethnic and regional backgrounds (Ajayi and Owumi, 2013). For instance, as part of the identification process, people in Nigerian society must have a local government identification document. This document helps to identify an individual not only as a Nigerian, but also in a state and a specific tribe of origin (Ebong et al., 2013).

Additionally, the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society prioritises men as the head. Though culturally valuable, this has been somewhat misapplied and abused; thereby creating exploitation and inequality between the male and female gender in Nigeria. In addition, as earlier mentioned, religion and class are other strong social dimensions in the Nigerian context. This is because religious and class ties in Nigeria significantly influence the behaviour and outcome of human relations at personal, organisational and national levels (Meagher, 2006). Again, this establishes the fact that diversity discussions in Nigeria are informed by social realities that embrace dominant social identities.

Furthermore, as a result of the diverse social identities and relations in Nigerian society, key pointers like understanding social differences and expectations in relation to employment, education, community engagement through CSR in order to enhance diversity management and national development should be significantly considered to promote equality and prevent conflicts amongst various social groups. There is a great opportunity to fully utilize diversity management in Nigeria. Again, this can embrace the enthusiasm of individuals, corporations and nation builders to ensure an adequate environment for consistent development, which is often underpinned by the quest to attain a democratic system or social equality system (Singh, 2011).

Correspondingly, MNCs that are well known for expressing their support and drive for diversity management as a business process (Wentling and Palma-Rivas, 2000), can contribute to promoting approaches to diversity management from an organisational level that could impact the individual and national levels in Nigeria. These practical ways for promoting diversity management in Nigeria as shown in

Diagram 1, can include mentoring or partnering with other corporations to promote diversity management, driving their strategy for diversity management beyond the workplace, as previous research highlight these MNCs do have some form of community influence (Frynas, 2005; Ioannou and Serafeim, 2012). This study has explored both the Nigerian environment as well as MNCs as a foundation for the conceptualisation of diversity in the Nigerian context.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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The background of the entire page is a photograph of several hands of different skin tones holding a map of the African continent. The map is spread out on a light-colored surface, and the hands are positioned around it, some pointing at specific areas. The colors on the map include shades of blue, green, yellow, and pink. The overall lighting is warm and slightly dim, creating a focused and collaborative atmosphere.

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