

**NYSC ANTHEM: AN INSTRUMENT FOR NATIONAL SUSTAINANCE AND
INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of NYSC anthem in national sustenance and cohesion in Nigeria. The NYSC scheme was established in 1973 during the regime of General Yakubu Gowon, for the promotion of national unity. Participant observation, as well as focus group discussion was employed in generating data which was explored through content analysis. Purposive sampling was used to select six Nigerian youths who participated in the NYSC scheme in the six geographical zones of Nigeria for focus group discussion. The NYSC anthem which was composed by Isaac Oluwole Adetiran is modeled after the Nigerian national anthem in its first stanza, thereby upholding patriotism, selflessness and other core national values. The anthem features in official programs of the NYSC scheme, from inauguration to passing out and discharge ceremony. Anthems signify and symbolize the vision, mission and the purpose of the body or institution for which it is meant to serve and represent. Out of all the physical and cognitive paraphernalia experienced within an establishment, it is the anthem shared that remains a binding force forever. The NYSC anthem is therefore the embodiment of the NYSC vision and mission meant to remain with the participants beyond the period of national service.

Keywords: NYSC anthem, Isaac Oluwole Adetiran, national integration, corps members, Nigerian national anthem.

Introduction

Sanda, (1999) defines National integration as the collective orientation of members of a society towards the nation and its society in such a way that micro-loyalties are not allowed to jeopardize the continued existence of the nation and its objectives, goals and ideals. Owede, (2018) also posits that National integration describes the togetherness or oneness felt by citizens of a country with regard to citizenship. He continued that national integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. According to Falade and Falade, (2013), the purpose of national integration is to build a united and strong nation. They further explained that national integration and unity require coordinated and concerted efforts towards unified value system that can promote oneness.

The need for national integration and cohesion in Nigeria is as a result of a number of factors and events which has brought about ethnic and religious loyalty, rather than patriotism to the nation. In addition, Nigeria is made up of hundreds of ethnic groups which all have their unique languages, as well as identities. Owede, (2018) explained that Nigeria has more than 500 ethnic groups which all have their varying languages and customs, thereby creating a country of rich ethnic diversity. Giving an historical discussion, Falade and Falade, (2013) noted that people of diverse historical and cultural backgrounds migrated and settled in different parts of the territories now referred to as Nigeria, and that the colonial administrators adopted the system of indirect rule in the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, which hindered inter and intra-communal unity. Olukoju, (1997) explained that by the time Nigeria got her independence in 1960, its artificial origin, coupled with other factors had bequeathed it a number of fundamental problems, of which is the challenge of integrating, into a cohesive socio-political whole, the various entities that were lumped together by the colonialists.

Furthermore, Falade and Falade, (2013) noted that Nigeria witnessed ethnic based agitations and party politics immediately after independence in 1960, which as a result, strengthened the ethnic bias and intolerance that existed among people from different parts of the nation. According to Oyewale (2010), the practice of ethnic politics in Nigeria has sustained the belief that each of the over 250 ethnic groups must struggle for its own share of the national resources. Similarly, Ifeanaccho and Nwagwu, (2009) also pointed out that Nigerians hate each other, they fear each other, they do not know each other because they cannot communicate with each other. They further noted that the political elites that took over from the colonial administrators did not help matters, as they were desperate for political power. According to Ifeanacho and Nwagwu, the elite resulted into ethnic politics as the easy way for gaining political power, which culminated in the Nigerian civil war, several military coups, fragile attempts at democratization, religious, ethnic and tribal crises and the rise of ethnic militias as well as terrorist groups.

Falade and Falade (2013) traced the problem of disunity and political instability to the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 by the colonialists. They explained that the peoples making up the country were not effectively integrated towards the end of evolving a true sense of national identity and commitment to the survival and development of a nation. According to them, the reason for the non-integration of the people from the diverse socio-political backgrounds is not far-fetched, as the colonialists were less interested in developing a united Nigeria nation, but rather, they were much more interested in the resources available in the colony. 'Hence, the policy of divide and rule was adopted to enable them to achieve their goals' (Falade and Falade, 2013). Ekanola (2006) concludes that Nigeria is bedeviled by myriad problems which, despite its oil riches, inhibit its development and even threaten its continued existence as a sovereign state.

Some attempts have been made to rescue the Nigerian nation from division that tended to impede her unity, growth and development. As a way of promoting national integration and cohesion, the Nigerian Government at various times had come up with programs and policies aimed at further uniting the nation. Such programs include Federalism Concept (1954), National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) (1973), establishment of Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, Revenue sharing formula, establishment of Unity secondary schools, National Sports Festival, National symbols, National honors award, political conference (2005), and national conference (2015).

The National Youth Service Corps was created on 22nd May, 1973 and launched in June 1973 during the regime of General Yakubu Gowon. The scheme was established based on decree No. 24 with the view to properly encourage and develop common ties among Nigerian youths, promote national unity and develop Nigerian youths and Nigeria into a great and dynamic economy. It was created as avenue for the reconciliation, reconstruction, and rebuilding of the nation after the civil war. The scheme requires graduates of universities and later polytechnics to sacrifice a year for national service immediately after graduation. According to Umukoro (2012), the personal sacrifice involved is the compulsory service for one year in any part of the country, regardless of distance and terrain, with no additional allowances for hardships, hazards and other forms of inconveniences claimable in a regular employment. Corps members are posted to states other than their state of origin where they are expected to mix with people from different ethnic groups, social and family backgrounds, and learn the culture of the indigenes in the location to which they are posted. The objectives of this scheme as stated in the NYSC act (revised edition 2004) are to:

- i. inculcate discipline in Nigerian youths by instilling in them a tradition of industry at work, and, of patriotic and loyal service to Nigeria in any situation they may find themselves;

- ii. raise the moral tone of the Nigerian youths by giving them the opportunity to learn about higher ideals of national achievement, social and cultural improvement;
- iii. develop in the Nigerian youths the attitudes of mind, acquired through shared experience and suitable training, which will make them more amenable to mobilization in the national interest;
- iv. enable Nigerian youths acquire the spirit of self-reliance by encouraging them to develop skills for self-employment;
- v. contribute to the accelerated growth of the national economy;
- vi. develop common ties among the Nigerian youths and promote national unity and integration;
- vii. remove prejudice, eliminate ignorance and conform at first hand the many similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups; and
- viii. develop a sense of corporate existence and common destiny of the people of Nigeria.

Several studies (Bray and Cooper, 1979; Falade and Falade, 2013; Ogbiji, 2013; Udeobasi, 2014; Owede, 2018) have identified the National Youth Service Corps as a scheme established to further strengthen integration and cohesion among Nigerians. However, none, to our knowledge have addressed the NYSC anthem as a tool in sustaining national integration and cohesion in Nigeria. This article therefore investigates the roles of the NYSC anthem which was composed by Isaac Oluwole Adetiran, in sustaining national integration and cohesion in Nigeria.

Methodology

Purposive sampling was used to select six Nigerian youths who participated in the NYSC scheme in the six geo-political zones of Nigeria for focus group discussion. Content analysis was utilized in analyzing data which also includes the texts of the NYSC anthem. Comparative analysis was employed in comparing the textual contents of the NYSC anthem and the Nigerian national anthem.

Theoretical framework

This article is anchored on the theory of national integration. According to Emmerson (1970), integration is the process which is followed by the ethnically plural society in which different groups having different language, customs, values and cultures, bring them into one national culture by eliminating their parochial loyalties. He further described national integration as the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows or eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties. He argues that problem of integration varies from nation to nation, depending on their history and ethnic composition. Integration, according to Weiner (n.d) covers a vast range of human relationship and attitudes - the integration of diverse and discreet,

cultural loyalties and the development of a sense of nationality, the integration of political units into a common territorial framework with a government which can exercise authority, the integration of the rulers and the ruled, the integration of the citizens into a common political process and finally, the integration of individuals into organizations for purposive activities.

The problems of nation building and national integration especially in Nigeria are complex. It is a two phase process which includes the anti-colonial phase and the integrative phase. Anti-colonial phase is concerned with the creation of an independent state which is self-ruled, hence the agitation for national independence which was realized in 1960. The second phase – the integration phase has continued to be in process since independence. It is a continuous process of transforming the inhabitants of the various ethnic groups into a nation. The NYSC scheme is one of the attempts of the Nigerian governments towards promoting national integration among ethnic nationalities that constitutes the Nigerian nation.

A profile of Isaac Oluwole Adetiran

Isaac Oluwole Adetiran is a Nigerian musicologist, teacher, choirmaster and composer. He was born in Igbajo in Osun state on 8th of September, 1947. He had his elementary education at the Baptist Missionary School in Igbajo. He grew up under the very strong influence of his mother, who was the choir mistress for the local Baptist Church. After completion of his primary education, Adetiran moved to Ibadan, where he featured prominently in the musical activities of a number of Anglican churches which includes Saint James's Cathedral, Oke Bola and Saint Stephen's Anglican Church, Inalende. In 1974, he proceeded to the Baptist Teachers College, Ede, for his secondary education. In 1978, Adetiran returned to Ibadan and joined the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC), Mokola parish, where he started his musical career. He joined the church choir, and began to play an active role, singing and playing both the organ and guitar. For his university education, Adetiran proceeded to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in music in 1983.

He took up an appointment as a music lecturer at The Polytechnic, Ibadan immediately after his university education in 1983. In 1987, Adetiran was appointed the Director of the Central Choir of the Celestial Church of Christ. At the Polytechnic, Ibadan, he rose through the ranks to become head of the department of music technology, as well as dean of the faculty of business and communication studies. He is currently the Director of Music of the Celestial Church of Christ Worldwide, as well as the Rector of the Celestial Church of Christ Academy of Music and Music technology. The composition of the NYSC anthem in 1983 is one of his landmark musical achievements.

The NYSC anthem

Youths ob - ey the clar - ion__ call; Let us__ lift o - ur
na - tion high. Und - er the sun or__ in the rain, With de - di -
ca - tion and self - less-ness. Ni - ge-ria's ours, Ni - ge - ria we serve.

Members, take the great salute
Put the Nation first in all
With service and humility
NYSC for the noble Youths
Make Nigeria a great nation

Far and near we come to serve
And to build our fatherland
With oneness and loyalty
NYSC for unity
Hail Nigeria our great nation

The NYSC anthem was composed as a tool for national integration and cohesion, as reflected in the texts of the three verses. An important feature of the NYSC anthem is the relationship it shares with the Nigerian national anthem in the message as reflected in the texts of the first verse. The lyrics of the first verse of the NYSC anthem is a simplified version of the Nigerian national anthem, as each line of the verse correlates with certain lines of the Nigerian national anthem as outlined below.

NYSC anthem

Youths obey the Clarion call
Let us lift our nation high
Under the sun or in the rain
With dedication and selflessness
Nigeria is ours, Nigeria we serve

Nigerian national anthem

Arise, O compatriots, Nigeria's call obey
To serve our Fatherland
With love and strength and faith
To serve with heart and might
To serve our Fatherland



A - rise, O com-pat-riots, Ni - ge-ria's call ob - ey. To serve our fa-ther land, With
 love and strength and faith. The lab-our of our her-oes past shall ne-ver be in vain. To
 server with heart and might, One nat-ion bound in free-dom, peace and u - ni - ty.

The first verse of the Nigerian national anthem

NYSC anthem upholds national values as it is present in the Nigerian national anthem and pledge. According to Ajere and Oyinloye (2011), core-values are attached prime priority as social ingredients for social transformation, peace, unity, stability, growth and development. They further explained that these values are in most cases enshrined in the national anthem and pledges of various countries of the world for citizens to internalize for inner transformation. The NYSC anthem promotes unity, patriotism, national integration, selflessness and service, which are part of the core values as contained in the Nigerian national anthem and pledge.

Similar to the Nigerian national anthem, the NYSC anthem calls the attention of Nigerian youths to the need to sacrifice a period of their youth to serving their country, just like the national anthem calls all citizens to selfless service towards nation building. The NYSC anthem charges youths to rise and contribute their quota in moving the nation forward through dedication and selflessness within the period of their compulsory national service and beyond. It goes on to urge corps members to put the nation first in everything they do, through team spirit, self-sacrifice, humility and loyalty. Humility within the context of the anthem refers to the need to maintain cordial relationship among corps members who have been deployed from various states, social background, ethnic groups and religion. Humility in this context also means that no corps member shall see himself as being above others, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, social and educational background. Humility is further upheld in the NYSC scheme during the 21 days camping orientation course through active interaction of members within their platoons, inter platoon activities and competitions, the use of same uniform and outfits by all members throughout the program, posting to places of primary assignment which requires members to start a new life and work with people of diverse cultures, and lots more. The anthem therefore serves as active reminder to corps members on the need to put aside personal profile and bias,

and work in unity with other members who have come from completely different cultures and as well have different values.

Furthermore, “under the sun or in the rain” as used in the anthem upholds self-sacrifice as an important feature in nation building. The phrase does not mean that corps members will have to remain in the rain and under a very hot sun during the period of their national service. Rather, the phrase is used metaphorically to conceptualize the sacrifice required in service towards nation building. This is evident in the camping activities of corps members during their orientation course, as camp officials do not hold corps members down under the rain as it is in the NYSC anthem. The real life manifestation of this phrase is witnessed by corps members at the end of their orientation course, when they are given letters of posting to their various places of primary assignment (PPA). At this last day, corps members are posted to villages, towns and organizations where they most likely would not have been to before, a completely strange environment where they knew nobody apart from fellow corps members who have also been posted there. In order to cope, they have to learn more of the language and culture of their host community. Majority of corps members do not find the situation unexpected, as it has always been emphasized in the texts of the NYSC anthem which says “under the sun or in the rain”, which implies “service even in difficult and unfavorable conditions”. In addition, the orientation course also prepares the minds of corps members for such situations.

For a nation that has been internally divided by several events and factors as enumerated earlier, the phrase “Nigeria is ours, Nigeria we serve” which is the last line of the first verse of the NYSC anthem serves the purpose of inculcating patriotism in Nigerian youths, thereby making corps members proclaim their allegiance to the nation, while also pledging to serve her. The significance of this line cannot be understated, as it is usually echoed by all corps members, including those who may have not joined in singing the anthem from the beginning probably because they do not know the entire texts of the anthem or for their nonchalant attitude. The emphasis on the last line is usually an expression of freedom on the part of corps members who have been stressed in day long programs of the orientation exercise. Having been under several hours of lecture, the NYSC anthem therefore signifies the end of such program, and a sign of relief. Although a good number of corps members only echo the phrase out of the joy of stress relief, the message of patriotism and service to the nation is unconsciously registered in their minds through the anthem.

The functional use of the NYSC anthem

The NYSC anthem features in official programs of the scheme, from inauguration to terminal passing out program, up till passing out and discharge ceremony. It is intensively used during the orientation exercise of newly engaged corps members.

Orientation exercise is one of the most important aspects of the NYSC scheme, and it lasts the duration of 3 weeks (21 days). During this exercise, prospective corps members are given preliminary education on the scheme and are prepared for inauguration which sees them take an oath of allegiance to the core values of the scheme which are centered on patriotism and national integration. Learning the NYSC anthem is one of the most important activities that precedes inauguration of prospective corps members, as it is sung every day and at various times throughout the period of orientation. The anthem is sung in the morning at the devotion, and it is sometimes sung at the end of long lectures, shortly before leaving for the dining hall or hostels. Learning and singing the NYSC anthem is made compulsory for all corps members, as the orientation camp is regimented, which leaves corps members with no option but to do whatever is required of them by camp officials who are a mix of civilian and military personnel.

For corps members in the NYSC band, playing the Nigerian national anthem, as well as NYSC anthem comes before any other thing, as these two anthems are regarded as symbols of national unity, and are played every day. The horn players are trained to play the anthems as well as other parade tunes correctly, while the drummers are continuously drilled until they get the drum sequences right. The importance of the two anthems is reflected in their use to commence programs during official parades such as inauguration and terminal passing out parade which closes the orientation exercise. The band plays the NYSC anthem often as opening and closing songs each time they meet for rehearsal. This is also to ensure that they master the tune and as well the sequence so much that they can no longer play it wrongly. This tradition is continued at the band community development (CDS) meetings where they meet and rehearse together in preparation for official events and social functions.

Furthermore, the importance of the NYSC anthem cannot be understated, as it serves as the most reliable take home content by corps members by the time they are leaving the orientation camp, as well as throughout the period of their service and beyond. Investigation into the attitude of corps members towards lectures and other activities during the orientation exercise reveal that a large number of them only attend such activities because they do not have an option, as a good number of them do not bother to take notes or even concentrate during lectures. However, the NYSC anthem in its nature as a song, finds its way into their minds, thereby filling their minds with the core values of the scheme and as well, that of the nation. In the worst scenario, one

would only find corps members who are familiar with the tune and few lines of the lyrics of the anthem but do not know the entire lyrics. This then makes the NYSC anthem an important tool in the dissemination of intended values of the nation and the scheme directed into the mind of corps members who are expected to nurture such in their minds even after the period of their national service.

Community development service (CDS) is also one of the important aspects of the NYSC scheme. It sees corps members converge in their CDS meeting venues with the aim of serving their host community. The general CDS meeting brings together all corps members serving in the same local government once in a month. The NYSC anthem features in these gatherings either at the commencement, the end or both, serving as opening and closing prayer.

Babangida (2002) emphasized the significance of nationalistic anthems in the course of unity and national integration. He posits that the lyrical content of such song goes a long way in affecting national unity and integration. This, according to him is the reason for substitution of the old Nigerian national anthem for the new one, since it carries some lyrical content which promotes tribal and lingual differences. In his words:

Indeed the replacement of the old Nigerian national anthem by the post-civil war national anthem, currently in use, stood the reality of ethnic nationalism upon its head. The old national anthem had appropriately postulated, "though tribe and tongue may differ, in brotherhood we stand", whereas the new anthem attempts to play down the multi-ethnic composition of the country (Babangida, 2008: 3).

Ogbiji (2013) also identified the impact of singing the national anthem and reciting the national pledge in the course of unifying and integrating the nation. According to him, the singing of the national anthem and recitation of the National pledge in schools is one of the pro-active measures that had been taken in the past and are being taken currently to ensure the restoration of societal values, motivation of good citizenship and improvement in the education system. Apart from the use of national anthems and pledges in promoting unity and cohesion, several musicians have also contributed musical contents with the aim of promoting unity and cohesion in Nigeria. A good example of such songs is Sunny Ade's "*Naijiria yii ti gbogbo wa ni*". Sunny Ade is a prominent Nigerian Juju musician, and a leading figure in the Nigerian popular music scene.

Nai-ji-ri-a yii ti gbo-gbo wa ni, Ko ma_ gbo-do ba - je;___ 'To-ri ko s'i-bo-mi-ran
 ti a le lo,___ A-jo o le da-bi i - le;___ E je k'a so' wo po k'a fi-mo s'o- kan,
 Gbee_ k'e-mi gbe.___ O ya_ k'a jo gbe o,___ Gbee_ k'e-mi gbe.---

Naijiria yii ti gbogbo wa ni

Ko ma gbodo baje

'Tori ko si' bomiran ti a le lo

Ajo o le dabi ile

E je k'a so' wo po, k'a fi' mo soka

Gbe e k'emi gbe

Oya k'a jo gbe o

Gbe e k'emi gbe

Nigeria is our father land

She must not fail

No place is as suitable as home

sojourning is unlike homeland

Let us come together in unity

Let us lift her together

Let us join hands and lift her together

Let us lift her together

The music is performed in the popular danceable Juju genre with full instrumentation, thereby making it widely embraced across Yoruba speaking states and communities in Nigeria. The song usually features in National celebrations and occasions where the spirit of national integration is required, in order to ginger the spirit of citizens towards national cohesion and integration.

Anthems signify and symbolize the vision, mission and the purpose of the body or institution for which it is meant to serve and represent. Hence, every word contained in the text of an anthem is carefully chosen to articulate the vision, mission and purpose of the body or organization to which it belongs. Everyone who passes through such organization or body is therefore expected to understand and experience the full meaning of its anthem. Out of all the physical and cognitive paraphernalia experienced within an establishment, it is the anthem they share that remains a binding force forever. Anthems serve as the connection between current and former members of an institution, body or organization. The NYSC anthem therefore brings about reminiscences and nostalgic feelings to Nigerians who have had the privilege of passing through the NYSC scheme, as it constantly reminds them of the essence of national integration and cohesion for which the scheme was established.

Conclusion

The National Youth Service Corps was established to encourage and develop common ties among Nigerian youths, as well as promote national unity. It is also aimed at developing Nigerian youths and Nigeria into a great and dynamic economy. Having been composed in three (3) verses, the anthem of the scheme just like the Nigerian national anthem and pledge, promotes core national values which include humility, service, patriotism, selflessness, among others. It shares a notable level of coherence in texts with the Nigerian national anthem, especially in its first verse, making it a simplified version of the Nigerian national anthem. The anthem articulates virtues of good citizenship meant to inculcate discipline, humility, selflessness, loyalty, team-spirit, and patriotism in the minds of corps members. It also reminds them of the need to work together in order to achieve a great nation.

The anthem is taught to corps members immediately they get into the orientation camp for their orientation exercise, and is sung on a daily basis throughout the orientation course which lasts three weeks. It features in morning devotions as well as other daily activities of the orientation exercise. Being in short verses enables corps members to easily memorize the first verse, thereby singing it at the beginning and the end of most orientation programs, as well as official gatherings after the orientation exercise, making it a memorable take home content for every corps members. Anthems signify and symbolize the vision, mission and the purpose of the body or institution for which it is meant to serve and represent. It serves as the connection between current and former members of an institution, body or organization. The NYSC anthem therefore brings about reminiscences and nostalgic feelings to Nigerians who have had the privilege of passing through the NYSC scheme, as it constantly reminds them of the essence of national integration and cohesion for which the scheme was established.

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