

## Evaluating the Synergy Between Nigeria's Cultural and Educational Policies in Promoting National Identity and Citizenship

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### Abstract

This study evaluated the synergy between the Cultural Policy for Nigeria (CPN) and the National Policy on Education (NPE) in their efforts to promote national identity and citizenship. Both policies had significant impact and implications for Nigerian citizens in preserving culture and administering education for national development. While citizenship is defined by culture, it is refined through education, which is recognized as one of the fundamental rights of citizens. The study relied on secondary sources of data collection to explore the concept of citizenship within the Nigerian context. It comparatively analyzed the cultural and educational policies, highlighting their respective strengths and weaknesses, similarities and differences, as well as areas that require improvement. Grounded in the Cultural Citizenship Theory advanced by scholars in the 1980s and 1990s, the study advocated for the inclusion of all citizens and equal access to cultural and educational resources, alongside active participation in national development. The theory posited that a fair society was one that empowered every individual to be a full citizen, and therefore must prioritize the rights, responsibilities, and identity of its people. Using SWOT analysis, the findings revealed that the cultural policy had the potential to promote cultural identity, diversity, and creativity, and to stimulate the Nigerian economy. However, it suffered from poor implementation, inadequate funding and resource allocation, as well as weak community engagement. Similarly, the education policy showed promise for national development but was hindered by infrastructural decay, ineffective pedagogy, poor teacher remuneration, and implementation challenges. To foster full patriotic participation among citizens, the study emphasized that the government needed to address insecurity, religious and cultural bias, discrimination, and ethnic favoritism in federal employment and tertiary institution admissions. It concluded by recommending a comprehensive policy review, institutional reforms, sufficient funding, and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for effective policy implementation.

**Keywords:** Citizenship, Culture, Cultural Policy, Education, Educational Policy, Nigeria

## 1. Introduction

Sections 25 – 27 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution stipulate that a person can become a citizen of the country by birth, by registration or by naturalization. For citizenship by naturalization, the person must be of good character; must have assimilated the culture of the immediate environment; and must be capable of contributing meaningfully to the development of Nigeria (Olorunfemi No. 3). This is because the growth and development of any nation rests squarely on the civic rights and responsibilities of her citizens. Citizenship extends beyond the legal state of being a member of a country. As a major concern of nationhood, it encompasses cultural identity, social belonging, civic engagement, rights and responsibilities of a person as a bona fide member of a country. Citizenship is a dynamic relationship between individuals and the state. It is a state that is defined by culture and refined by education. While education aims to make citizens good and responsible members of their society, culture serves as the cornerstone of citizenship. Both culture and education working hand in hand for the well-being of individual members of the society and the development of their nation.

When citizens are educated, they are empowered to become agents of change for national transformation. It is the reason why education is one of the rights of citizens. It plays an essential role in enhancing character development and social responsibility of citizens, making them nurtured and cultured minds. According to Hooks, the primary purpose of education is to foster critical thinking, promote liberation, and empower individuals, especially those from marginalized communities, to challenge injustices and contribute to personal and societal transformation (Hooks 45). Education entails enculturation, the process of learning and imbibing the culture of a society; through which citizens imbibe the culture of their nation. It is defined by the UNESCO 2009 cultural framework as “a means of transmitting cultural values and skills”. It is therefore, as vital as culture is to an individual.

The Cultural Policy for Nigeria (CPN) defines culture as the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenges of living in their environment (FRN 1). Culture embodies set of beliefs and behaviour that is dynamic or changes with time, learned through education, preserved and passed down to future generations. It is a complex concept that encompasses both tangible and intangible experiences, material and immaterial aspects, food, dressing, language, law, beliefs, customs and traditions (Nzemeke and Erhagbe 86). In Nigeria, a country with over 350 ethnic groups and over 500 languages (Federal Republic of

Nigeria NPE iii), there are challenges in education owing to cultural diversity. These challenges affect the country's economic development, leading to the loss of some aspects of cultural heritages and languages, a decline in cultural development of the country and lack of citizen's patriotism. The nation saw it fit to develop strategies to address these challenges addressed through the establishment of cultural and educational policies.

In the light of the above, this research paper undertakes the task of evaluating the synergy between Cultural Policy for Nigeria (1988) and National Policy on Education (2013) 6th Edition policy. This is done to examine their impact on Nigerian citizens, and cultural development. By examining the intersection between culture and education, this paper aims to understand how these policies foster or hinder the development of inclusive citizenship in Nigeria. Through a critical SWOT – Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunity and Threat - analysis of the policy documents; the research seeks to identify areas for improvement in the cultural and educational policies in Nigeria as well as their implications for Nigerian citizens, hence, contributing to ongoing debates and discourses on citizenship, culture and education in Nigeria.

## **1.1 Citizenship: The Nigerian Experience**

Citizenship refers to the status of being a member of a particular nation or state, with the rights and responsibilities that come with it. Marshall defines citizenship as a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community, emphasizing that citizenship encompasses three elements: civil, political, and social rights (23). The civil rights of citizen in Nigeria includes rights to equality, justice, fair hearing and freedom of speech. The political rights of a citizen in Nigeria includes rights to vote and be voted for, right to run for an elected office and right to have a say in the affairs of the nation (Marshall 23). The social rights of a citizen in the country include rights to education, healthcare, security and freedom of association with any group. Bosniak defines citizenship as a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses a range of rights, responsibilities, and identities belonging to members of a society. He explains that the concept implies a legal status, a political identity, and a cultural affiliation (12). Such responsibilities of citizenship include obeying laws (Hobbes 145), paying taxes (Locke 123), and participating in civic activities (Putnam 190). In Nigeria, citizens owe the government the responsibility of obeying laws pertaining to environment, security, elections, media and use of speech among others, which failure to comply attract legal punishment.

On his own perspective, Isin defines citizenship as “a relation between a person and a polity that is mediated by rights, duties, and identities” (123). He emphasizes the performative and

activist dimensions of citizenship, arguing that citizens are not just passive recipients of rights but also active agents who shape their own citizenship. These scholarly definitions underscore different approaches to understanding citizenship, from Marshall's focus on rights and membership to Bosniak's emphasis on complexity and multifacetedness, and Isin's stress on performativity and agency.

Specific requirements and processes for citizenship may vary depending on the country and its laws. Some countries such as The United States offer additional pathways to citizenship, through being in military service or exceptional achievements. Aleinikoff & Klusmeyer state that citizenship in Nigeria is often acquired through five ways: birth, descent, naturalization, marriage and investment or economic factor (34):

**By Birth**, citizenship is acquired by being born within the territory of a country. This means that, for instance, anyone born in Nigeria, regardless of their parents' nationality, automatically becomes a citizen of Nigeria.

**By Descent**, citizenship is acquired through ancestry or parental descent. This means that individuals in Nigeria owe their citizenship to their parents' or grandparents' nationality, even if they were born abroad. An example of such Nigerian citizen is Nnamdi Kanu, leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group, who was born and brought up abroad.

**By Naturalization**, citizenship is acquired through a legal process that typically involves meeting eligibility requirements (e.g. age, years of residency, language proficiency, cultural assimilation, etc.), submitting an application for it, passing a citizenship test, and taking an oath of allegiance (Aleinikoff & Klusmeyer 35).

**By Marriage**, citizenship is acquired through a legal union of a Nigerian citizen with that of Canada or the United States, for instance. This is often subject to certain conditions as it applies to citizenship by naturalization, in addition to demonstration of knowledge of the country's culture and customs.

**By Investment or Economic**, citizenship is bestowed on a societal individual as a result of investing in a country, typically through purchasing real estate, having shares in a business or industry, depositing funds in a national bank or meeting other economic criteria (Rawls 234).

Olorunfemi mentioned sixth form of acquiring citizenship called **Honourary Citizenship** (No. 4). Though not spelt out in the constitution, it is a form of citizenship that is acquired as a mark of honour given to a person by the president of a country. Example is given of Wesley Snipes,

a famous Hollywood actor who was given a honorary citizenship by President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2005, following his three days visit to Nigeria.

Citizenship has assumed different types or theoretical dimensions in recent times including liberal, republican and metropolitan types. Liberal citizenship emphasizes individual rights and freedoms (Rawls 234). Republican citizenship emphasizes civic participation and community involvement (Pocock 123). Metropolitan citizenship has to do with global features of citizenship and its human rights implications (Nussbaum 145).

Globally, there are certain challenges that affect citizenship including globalization and transnationalism (Sassen 123), immigration and border control (Bosniak 145), identity politics and ethnic politics (Kymlicka 167). These problems are also peculiar to Nigerian citizenship. Betiang affirms that globalization and transnationalism which involve interdependencies or increasing relations among nations of the world have contributed to the continuous weakening and decline of Nigeria's political and economic autonomy and independence, leading to erosion of her cultural values and identity (6). Immigration has led to brain drain, lower labour force and decrease in human development index while border control poses security and economic challenges that border on food scarcity. Ethnic and identity politics affect the social cohesion and national integration of Nigeria, leading to agitations for power and resource control as well as ethno-religious violence and polarization of the polity. It is on these grounds that Isin observes that there is need for nations to "rethink" citizenship especially in the current age of globalization (145).

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This research draws on theories of culture, education and citizenship to explore the relationship between cultural policy, education policy, and citizenship within Nigeria. The analysis emphasized on how cultural and educational policies influence identity formation, civic engagement, and national integration, using a comparative lens. The framework integrates Cultural Citizenship Theory first found in T.H. Marshall and Thomas Bottomore's 1950 seminar essay *Citizenship and Social Class*. It became more popular in the 1980s and 1990s by scholars such as Tony Bennett, Wiel Veugelers, Isolde de Groot, Jim McGuigan, Toby Miller, and David Hesmondhalgh (Edgar and Sedgwick 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). The cultural citizenship theory was a response to a shifting in government's role in arts funding, media regulation and cultural heritage management.

T.H. Marshall's version argues that a fair society is a society that supports everyone to be a full citizen and therefore explores the rights, responsibilities and identity of individuals within a political community. Citizenship is viewed from four distinct points – liberal, republican, multicultural and global. While liberal citizenship explores individual rights and legal status, republican citizenship explore individual civic participation and public virtue. Multicultural explores individual's diverse cultural identities within a nation while global view individual's transnational responsibilities in a globalized world (Edgar and Sedgwick 43+). The major concern of this theory is the necessity of active participation by all citizens for the survival of a democratic nation, and the role of State policies in shaping citizens' identity, participation, and responsibilities within the society.

Expanding on this, 1980s and 1990s scholars like Tony Bennett and Toby Miller examined how government, institutions and societies manage, promote and regulate cultural expressions and heritage through formal policies. To create an intersection of culture, politics, economics and identity, they proposed citizenship in modes: (1) Instrumentalism that advocates for the use of culture to achieve broader goals; (2) Cultural Democracy that advocates for the inclusion of every citizen ensuring equal access to cultural resources and participation across diverse communities; (3) Governance of Culture examines how cultural institutions influence public values and narratives; (4) Creative Economy examines the role of cultural industries in innovation and economic development; and (5) National Identities examines the use of cultural policy to promote shared values, heritage and patriotism (Edgar and Sedgwick 146).

## **2.1 SWOT Analysis of Cultural Policy for Nigeria (1988)**

The *Cultural Policy for Nigeria (CPN)* aims to promote and preserve Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, diversity, and identity for sustainability and development (Federal Republic of Nigeria 12). The policy is a comprehensive framework that takes into cognizance the multicultural existence or cultural diversity of the Nigerian society, recognizes the importance of culture in contributing to national development and seeks to harness the potentials of arts, material and immaterial culture for economic growth, social cohesion, and international cooperation (Federal Republic of Nigeria *CPN* 15). As contained in the document, the major objectives of the policy are: promoting Nigerian culture locally and internationally, preserving cultural heritage sites, monuments, and artifacts, supporting cultural industries and creative entrepreneurship and encouraging cultural education and awareness. The policy is summarized into the following key aspects:

**Cultural Diversity Promotion:** This recognizes and celebrates Nigeria’s over 350 ethnic groups and their unique cultural experiences, beliefs and practices, customs and traditions, dressing and material culture among others. As noted by Nigerian cultural scholar, Obafemi, the document acknowledges the fact that “culture is a vital aspect of Nigeria’s national identity and development” (45). The policy’s emphasis on cultural preservation and promotion reflects this recognition.

**Cultural Industries Development:** The policy supports the development of indigenous cultural industries, arts and performances such as dance and music, film and theatre, festivals and carnivals, among others, to promote creativity and job creation. The document states clearly that such cultural and theatrical arts and skills are essential tools for boosting the economy of the nation and promoting unity, harmony and national integration. It is against this backdrop that the annual event, Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC 77), was initiated by the Nigerian government as part of the policy’s strategies for harnessing and promoting our cultural arts, theatre and performances.

**Heritage Preservation:** The policy emphasizes the importance of preserving Nigeria’s cultural heritage, including monuments, cultural arts and intangible cultural practices (Federal Republic of Nigeria *CPN* 25). It is strategic and stringent on protecting and conserving historical sites, museums, art galleries and cultural artifacts. This is in line with the policy’s recognition of the potentials of these sites for historical preservation, tourism development and environmental sustainability.

**Cultural Education:** The policy advocates for the integration of cultural studies, heritage studies, cultural and creative arts into school curricula to promote cultural diversity, cultural awareness and appreciation. To this end, the policy recommends the teaching of Nigerian culture and indigenous languages at various levels of education, beginning as early as age zero, with one of the three major languages or the language of the immediate environment as medium of instruction (Federal Republic of Nigeria *NPE* 5). In view of achieving this end, the Nigerian University Commission was encouraged to introduce a general course titled “Nigerian Peoples and Culture” in all Nigerian universities while Civic Education is taught at primary and secondary schools level to encourage patriotic citizenship and learning about the history, culture, customs and traditions of the Nigerian peoples.

**Community Engagement:** The policy also recognizes the importance of community engagement and participation in cultural development (Obafemi 50). For instance, where

myths function as cultural blueprints, providing shared narratives that link the past, present, and future generations. And in most Igbo communities, the Umuada (daughters of the land), acted as intermediaries and guardians of tradition, ensuring the enforcement of social norms (Ayeni & Ben, 157). By doing this, the policy creates room for communities and their members to engage and participate in cultural events and activities aimed at showcasing and promoting cultural heritage, hence serving as a medium of social mobilization, inclusiveness and unification of diversity.

**International Cooperation:** The policy encourages international cooperation, collaboration and partnership to promote Nigerian culture globally. The implementation of this can be seen in the context of Calabar Carnival in Cross River State in which international organizations and communities such as Brazil and South Africa often participate in the annual event. The carnival itself was adopted from the Trinidad & Tobago model of carnival in 2005 by former governor Donald Duke when he led an entourage to Spain to inspect how they played their own carnival (Onah 86).

**Strengths:** As affirmed by Ojo, the strong points of the Cultural Policy of Nigeria are that it promotes cultural diversity and inclusivity, supports creative industries and economic growth, and preserves cultural heritage for future generations (54). Nzemeke and Erhagbe also confirm that the Cultural Policy Nigeria has the potential to promote cultural diversity, creativity, and national identity through its emphasis on harnessing the unique features of the diverse cultures of Nigeria. The policy enables all cultures to meet, interact and coexist. It integrates the country and promotes the vision of one Nigeria. It also creates economic avenues and pathways for local artists and craft men to commodify and market their arts through exhibitions and performances.

**Weaknesses:** The weak points of the Cultural Policy of Nigeria include limited funding and resources, insufficient implementation and enforcement, potential for cultural homogenization and over-reliance on community engagement which is of poor level. The policy propounds good ideas but these ideas are not practically, properly and optimally executed. On paper, the country advocates for “One Nigeria” but practically, there is no one Nigeria but religious, cultural, ethnic, and tribal division, even within the same State. This affirmed by Osaghae who argues that the Nigerian state is characterized by “deeply entrenched ethno-religious cleavages that continually undermine the idea of a shared national identity” (Osaghae 7). Similarly, Suberu observes that federalism and identity politics in Nigeria have failed to resolve

intergroup distrust, instead institutionalizing difference and sustaining fragmentation under the banner of national unity (Suberu 23). In the cases where policy is executed, there is lack of continuity as government now prioritize ‘Science’ over ‘Art’ with little consideration to Art in annual budget. Special provision and incentives are made to the study of science including allocating 60% to 80% of university budget to Science and Technology (Federal Republic of Nigeria *NPE* 2, 28). Take for example the FESTAC 77, the annual national festival created a room for people from different parts of the country to create traditional art forms from their communities such as dances, music, poetry, artefacts, and puppetry but since after the last edition hosted in Lagos in 1977, no such events has ever been organized in the Nigeria. This is just like The AU, that seeks to celebrate and preserve Africa’s rich cultural heritage while addressing the socio-political implications of cultural diversity through initiatives like the African Cultural Renaissance Campaign (Ayeni & Ellah, 107). Moreover, some states, local government areas and communities refuse to take part in national cultural events and activities because of the discrimination they experience in some areas of social life such as employment or university admission. Perhaps this is why Obafemi, observed that “community engagement is crucial for the success of cultural policy in Nigeria” (50). Meanwhile, the visibility of African aesthetics-such as the syncopated beats of Afrobeat, the diffusion of Amapiano, or the global adoption of Ankara prints has grown significantly at the global stage (Okey et al, 2).

**Opportunities:** The policy offers opportunities for harnessing artistic repertoire with cultural tourism for economic development, showcasing Nigerian culture globally and fostering national unity and identity. The policy has also ensured the establishment of some relevant institutions and frameworks to facilitate the actualization of the policy’s objectives. These include the National Council for Arts and Culture which is the apex body responsible for implementing the cultural policy and State and Local Government Councils’ Cultural Centre Complexes which provide the platforms for events that promote cultural development at the grassroots level (Federal Republic of Nigeria *CPN* 45 and 50). These institutions are instrumental in the development of local talents, arts and creative industries.

**Threats:** The threats associated with the policy include erosion of culture due to globalization and urbanization, ethno-religious conflicts and cultural divisions, brain drain and loss of cultural expertise. Ojo confirms that despite efforts to address these challenges of inadequate funding, infrastructure, and implementation, there persist, reducing the effectiveness of the policy (56). Moreover, a good number of the cultural centres complexes that are supposed to

facilitate cultural performances and performative arts are moribund, rickety, or non-functional. Where functional, they have been reduced to occasional presentation of traditional dances at celebrity events, for money. This challenge applies to the cultural centre complex in Calabar, Cross River State.

## 2.2 SWOT Analysis of Nigeria's National Policy on Education (6<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2013)

The *National Policy on Education (NPE)* is a national guideline for the management, implementation and administration of education at all levels. For this study, policy documents were carefully chosen because they directly shape how culture and education are used to build national identity in Nigeria. Official policies from the Federal Ministry of Education and the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture were selected, as they represent the government's formal commitments to citizenship, values, and cultural development. The documents were compared by closely reading them side by side and identifying shared themes such as identity, civic responsibility, language, and heritage. This made it possible to see where the policies support each other and where gaps exist. SWOT analysis was appropriate because it provides a clear, practical way to assess policy strengths and weaknesses, while also highlighting opportunities for collaboration and challenges that may hinder effective implementation. The policy aims to provide quality education and special needs services for all citizens as well as create benchmarks for educational management and financing in the country (Federal Republic of Nigeria *NPE* 1). The policy also seeks to provide a blueprint to enable the acquisition of knowledge in relation to cultural experiences and scholarships that meet international standards, with the general objectives to promote social mobility, economic growth, and national development. Ayeni & Ebong (2) observe that: The drive to achieve the millennium goal and the proper implementation of the Nigerian Policy on Education (NPE) should be seen as a means to mass economic participation and mobilization. The effort should be geared at building an educational system oriented towards the consolidation of a humanistic, democratic, proactive, participatory, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multilingual and inter-cultural society. The policy is summarized into the following key aspects:

**Universal Basic Education (UBE):** The Nigerian policy for education recognizes the role of education in the success and development of a nation, and in the formation of responsible character in her citizens. To this end, this aspect of the policy ensures that education at the Basic level shall be compulsory, free, universal and qualitative education for citizens aged 6-15 - at pre-primary, primary and junior secondary school levels. This is the aspect of the policy

that establishes the 9-3-4 system of education which implies that a citizen ideally spends nine years in basic education (6 years of primary and 3 years of junior secondary), three years in senior secondary school and four years of tertiary education which include universities, polytechnics, monotechnics and colleges of education (Federal Republic of Nigeria *NPE* iv).

**Curriculum Reform and Content Development:** This aspect of the policy focuses on developing pedagogic methods and skills development techniques, improving critical thinking and academic excellence, and enhancing entrepreneurship and innovation in education. It recommends courses to be taught at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education in Nigeria to enhance quality education. These cut across religious and cultural values, civic education, science, technology, business and vocational studies.

**Teacher Education and Development:** This has to do with improving teacher training welfare and capacity building through workshops and programmes. The establishment of Teachers Training Institute (TTI) and its compulsory training for all would-be teachers, minimum of Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) qualification, knowledge in Information Technology (IT) and a one-year internship (Teaching Practice); are all measures put in place by the policy to ensure the competence of a teacher. There is also the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) that regulates teaching profession and practice, without which one cannot teach in the country (Federal Republic of Nigeria *NPE* 28-29).

**Education Infrastructure Development:** This is concerned with upgrading school facilities, equipment, and technology and providing instructional materials, teaching aids and learning tools that altogether create a convenient environment for teaching and learning. However, considering the deplorable state of educational infrastructure in the country, citizens have not been able to achieve satisfactory learning experiences. Most secondary schools have no scientific laboratories, functional theatres and computers to meet with the global technological innovation and advancement. Some children in the rural areas go through primary and secondary schools without ever seeing a computer or touching one.

**Access and Equity:** The policy promotes gender equality, cultural diversity, inclusive education, adult education programmes and special needs support. It emphasizes a form of education that is provided without discrimination to age, gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnicity background and peculiar individual challenges but based on the principles of humanity and liberality (Federal Republic of Nigeria *NPE* 1). The policy spells out that every Nigerian citizen has a right to education as education is vital for the promotion of a progressive

and united Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria *NPE* 1). As a result, no child should be limited by cultural and gender beliefs and practices. It has a section that prescribes learners rights, and laws and ethical principles to guide the teaching profession. For instance, it warns against sex for grades, intimidation and exploitation between teachers and learners.

**Strengths:** Ntamu notes that the strengths of the Nigerian educational policy lie in its ability to make clear emphasis on universal access and equity; focus on skills development and entrepreneurship, and recognition of teachers training and development needs (22). The policy is all-inclusive, making provision for all citizen from zero years, regardless of social status, gender or religion, as well as those with individual challenges; a well structure part to professionalism for learners and educators, as well as funding, administration and implementation of the policy for maximum impact. Ntamu states further that these are the basic and most necessary things that need to be considered in providing quality education in any nation, be it advanced or developing country.

**Weaknesses:** Nwamuo identify some deficiencies in the Nigerian educational policy to include inadequate funding and resource allocation, poor infrastructure and facilities, brain drain, shortage of qualified teachers and overstaffing (45). The policy fails to ensure effective avenues for adequate action to ensure that schools and universities are provided with sufficient staff and teaching support units, libraries, resource rooms, as well as teaching and learning materials including journals and textbooks for reading, classroom blocks for classes, computers and internet access for browsing and online studies, projectors and public address systems for lectures. It did not specify the time and ways in which these things will be provided and distributed to reach the citizens. As such, while the policy has well defined goals and objectives, its implementation to physical actualization is deficit. Most Nigerian government owned secondary schools, universities, polytechnics, colleges and institutes lack basic educational infrastructure, which is a challenge to citizenship education. While some institutions have less number of qualified teachers to handle core subject areas, others are overstaffed with personnel who have inadequate qualification, experience and competence. This is as a result of individualism, ethnicity, and religious affiliations infiltrating the employment system of Nigeria. It poses a serious problem as it reduces the quality and standards of education given to Nigerian citizens, and affects their patriotic spirit.

**Opportunities:** The NPE has leveraged on technology for innovative learning, partnerships with private sector and international organizations with emphasis on vocational and technical

education to meet with global standard. The policy offers good prospects in that it makes provision for adoption of advanced and sophisticated technological equipment, collaboration with owners of private schools and partnership with international organizations such as United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to initiate programmes and support services that can optimize the educational experience of her citizens (Federal Republic of Nigeria *NPE* 31-40). The policy's emphasis on entrepreneurship and skills acquisition, and vocational skills, is also very relevant in the personal development and preparation of citizens for globalized industrial skills, knowledge and certification in a chosen trade or career for post-secondary students. This will help in reducing the level of unemployment and joblessness of Nigerian youths and citizens.

**Threats:** The weakness of the policy becomes even more apparent when examined against concrete and well-documented realities on the ground. Nigeria's education system operates within an environment of persistent insecurity, structural discrimination, and policy contradictions that have been repeatedly flagged by scholars, civil society organizations, and official reports. Armed violence and criminality have profoundly disrupted education in northern Nigeria. Since 2009, Boko Haram has framed Western-style education as illegitimate, leading to systematic attacks on schools, teachers, and students (Pérouse de Montclos, p. 45). This has resulted in the closure and abandonment of schools in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, which are not mere collateral damage but central to Boko Haram's strategy. Thurston (p. 78) highlights how these attacks undermine state authority and instill fear in parents, causing long-term withdrawal of children, especially girls, from education.

Watkins (p. 102) emphasizes that such violence erodes not only access to education but also trust in the state's ability to protect its citizens. The mass abductions of girls, notably in Chibok and Dapchi, exemplify this crisis, as families withdraw their daughters from school out of fear (Matfess, p. 59). Comolli (p. 34) and Kendhammer (p. 67) further stress that the lack of accountability for these crimes perpetuates a culture of impunity, threatening the future of educational peace.

Beyond insecurity, systemic inequality in access to tertiary education further undermines public confidence in national education policies. One of the most contentious issues in Nigeria's education system remains the long-standing disparity in Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) cut-off marks between northern and southern states. Empirical data indicate that candidates from certain northern states have historically gained admission into federal

universities with cut-off marks as low as 130–140, while candidates from southern states often need scores of 180–200 or higher for the same courses (Adebayo 118; Okolie 67). This disparity is officially justified under the “educationally disadvantaged states” framework, yet critics argue that it has morphed into a tool of structural ethnic and regional favoritism rather than a temporary corrective measure. Research by Adeyemi (94) reveals that such uneven benchmarks exacerbate perceptions of exclusion and injustice among southern candidates, many of whom view the admissions process as politically manipulated rather than merit-based. This sentiment is supported by a survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (2020), which found that over 60% of respondents from southern states believe the admissions process is unfairly biased against them. Ethno-cultural bias is further compounded by discrimination within the tertiary system itself, particularly between university and polytechnic graduates. Despite policy rhetoric promoting technical and vocational education, holders of Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) continue to face limited access to postgraduate studies and senior civil service positions compared to their university counterparts. A study by Okafor (141) highlights that this dichotomy creates an institutionalized hierarchy that devalues practical and technical knowledge. The National Board for Technical Education (9) corroborates this by noting that the lack of recognition for HND holders undermines Nigeria’s development aspirations and exacerbates youth unemployment. Furthermore, a report by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (2021) emphasizes that the exclusion of HND holders from key employment opportunities perpetuates a cycle of inequality and underemployment, particularly among the youth, who are increasingly disillusioned with the education system. This systemic bias not only contradicts the nation’s development goals but also fuels socio-economic disparities across regions

Corruption and mismanagement of education funds deepen these challenges. Audit reports and investigative studies reveal persistent diversion of funds earmarked for school infrastructure, security, and teacher welfare, resulting in poorly equipped schools and unsafe learning environments (Transparency International 56). In universities and colleges, cases of cult violence, sexual assault, robbery, and intimidation of students are routinely reported, yet policy responses remain largely reactive and weakly enforced. The absence of firm sanctions against perpetrators sends a troubling signal that student safety is not a priority of the state.

These failures point to a critical gap between policy declarations and lived realities. The inability of both federal and state governments to decisively address insecurity, discriminatory

admissions practices, and systemic corruption erodes citizens' trust in public institutions. When students and parents perceive education as unsafe, unfair, and politically skewed, loyalty to national values weakens, and faith in the promise of education as a tool for social mobility diminishes. In this sense, the policy's silence on enforcement and accountability does not merely reflect administrative oversight; it actively contributes to the reproduction of inequality and alienation within the Nigerian state.

### **3. Application of Cultural Citizenship Theory**

This study applies this theory to examine how the Nigerian cultural and educational policies help foster citizenship by promoting civic awareness and unity as well as encouraging social responsibility and national loyalty. This is done through creation of policies, such as the *Cultural Policy for Nigeria* (1988) and the *National Policy for Education* (6<sup>th</sup> edition 2013), that facilitate equal access to cultural and educational resources for the diverse communities. In the Nigerian context, these dimensions are especially relevant as Nigeria has over 350 ethnic groups and over 500 languages. To avoid marginalization or dominance of one language or ethnic group, English was chosen as a lingua franca, as well as three major languages – Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba – that cuts across most ethnic groups as medium of education and commerce. This also includes instructing early school students in the language of their immediate community. This is to ensure all-inclusiveness, which encourages social responsibility and national patriotism as citizens have the understanding that no culture is above theirs. The study examines to what extent cultural and educational policies align to promote a unified sense of citizenship.

#### **3.1 Cultural Policy for Nigeria (CPN) and National Policy on Education (NPE): Convergences and Divergences**

The CPN and NPE are collaborative as well as divergent in their content and implementation processes. Both have a meeting point in the 'school system'. While the cultural policy proposes the school system as a medium through which culture can be popularized and promoted, the educational policy incorporates the study of Nigerian indigenous language and culture as early as the Early Childhood Education which begins from 0-4 years. Another similarity is the thematic emphasis on national development. Both policies aim to promote national growth and development by harnessing the potentials of culture with creativity, education with innovation and theory with practice. The recognition of diversity is another meeting point as both policies acknowledge and celebrate Nigeria's cultural and linguistic diversity and outline strategies for

promoting this diversity and harnessing it for national growth and development (Nzemeke & Erhagbe 78). For instance, the integration of Nigerian indigenous languages into climate education presents an opportunity to localize climate discourse, enhance public understanding, and encourage behavioural change (Ayeni et al., 2026b: 2). As Communication barriers frequently exacerbate misunderstandings and escalate tensions (Ayeni & Itam, 2025: 17). While cultural diversity is to be promoted through means such as cultural education and arts performances, linguistic diversity is to be celebrated through integration of indigenous languages into school curriculum. Ayeni & Okey, (cited in Odey et al., 1; Ayeni, 21) note that: In an increasingly interdependent world, intercultural communication plays a crucial role in social, professional, and diplomatic interactions.

Another convergence between both policies is their focus on youth development. Both policies prioritize the development of young Nigerian citizens, as the future of the nation, whether through cultural education or formal education. They also agree in their objective of encouraging creativity, technological innovation and globalization. Cultural policies create avenues for discovery, grooming, development and actualization of creative, artistic and theatrical talents, creativity and innovation through performances, arts festival competitions and exhibitions while educational policy create avenues for development of creativity and innovation in terms of business, vocational studies and entrepreneurial skills acquisition.

On the other hand, the divergence in the policies is found in their scope and focus. Ntamu notes that while the cultural policy focuses on preserving and promoting Nigerian culture, heritage, arts, customs and traditions, the education policy focuses on providing formal education, knowledge and skills development. He also adds that the cultural policy relies on community engagement and participation to ensure cultural preservation and promotion, while education policy emphasizes government provision of infrastructural development, instructional materials and teacher training for improved learning and teaching experiences (Ntamu 59). Cultural policy seeks to foster collaboration and participation of local government areas and communities in cultural activities in order to promote development, create unity and harmony, social cohesion and national integration, whereas educational policy aims to provide infrastructural facilities and improve teaching experience in the academia.

Another area of divergence is in the funding and resource allocation; where the educational policy considers and receives significantly more funding than cultural policy. This is because the education sector is considered of more importance to the growth and development of the

Nigerian, in regards to science and technological innovations than the Arts which has been relegated to entertainment until recent regards for its tourist potentials Yet, art forms like narrative have for long functioned, as a cultural blueprint for articulating and transmitting moral and social values across temporal and cultural contexts (Ayeni et al, 3). Again, the cultural policy priorities the preservation, promotion and presentation of cultural heritage and linguistic identity of citizens, while the educational policy priorities economic growth, skill acquisition and social mobility of citizens in the nation.

#### **4. Recommendation**

In many public schools and cultural centres, programmes promoting civic values and heritage awareness were either irregular or symbolic due to limited resources. The Federal Government of Nigeria should therefore treat education and culture as core development infrastructure by increasing budgetary allocations and ensuring transparent disbursement. When funds reach schools, museums and community centres on time, they translate directly into functioning libraries, cultural clubs, excursions and creative workshops that shape everyday civic learning.

Field evidence also revealed that students respond more positively to citizenship education when it is rooted in familiar histories, languages and traditions. Cultural and heritage studies should thus be meaningfully integrated into curricula, not as optional topics but as lived learning experiences supported by trained teachers. This requires targeted recruitment and continuous professional development for educators with expertise in indigenous knowledge and cultural studies.

The SWOT analysis in the paper makes the problem of weak coordination feel very real and practical rather than abstract. In everyday terms, Nigeria's cultural and educational institutions are working hard, but often not together. Agencies like the National Council for Arts and Culture, the Federal Ministry of Art, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy, and the National Universities Commission tend to pursue similar goals along separate paths. This lack of coordination wastes resources and leaves students learning about culture mainly from textbooks, instead of experiencing it directly. Yet the same analysis shows how much potential exists. Nigeria's rich traditions, creative industries, and wide network of schools could easily complement one another. When students visit heritage sites, interact with artists, or engage in creative projects, national identity becomes something they live, not just memorize. Poor collaboration also makes Nigerian culture vulnerable to global influences that can dilute local heritage. Closer institutional partnerships would therefore turn existing strengths into

meaningful learning experiences and make citizenship education more engaging and relevant. Finally, participants consistently linked citizenship to fairness, safety and inclusion. Strengthening security, enforcing accountability and eliminating discrimination in education and employment are essential for building trust in the state. When citizens feel protected, represented and valued, national identity moves beyond slogans to become a shared, lived commitment to “One Nigeria.”

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