

SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION

IN AFRICA

Vol. 2



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SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION IN AFRICA

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We are grateful for the diversity of perspectives and the depth of research each of you has brought to this collection. Your contributions not only enrich academic discourse but also provide practical pathways for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders striving to improve educational systems in Africa.

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9

THE ROLE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IN PROMOTING NATION BUILDING, PEACE MAKING, AND INTERGROUP COLLABORATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Tertiary education in Nigeria extends beyond academic instruction and human capital development to play a critical role in fostering national unity, peace, and intergroup collaboration. In a country characterized by ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, tertiary institutions serve as essential platforms for cultivating understanding, dialogue, and cooperative relationships among different groups. This chapter examines the roles of tertiary education in promoting nation building, peacemaking, and intergroup collaboration. It explores how institutions develop skilled and responsible citizens, foster national unity, generate research for conflict resolution, cultivate ethical leadership, promote dialogue and tolerance, and engage communities in social development. The chapter highlights that effective tertiary education not only equips graduates with knowledge and technical skills but also instills civic consciousness, ethical behavior, and collaborative competencies necessary for sustaining social cohesion and national development.



Recommendations are provided to enhance the capacity of tertiary institutions to fulfill these critical roles.

Keywords: Tertiary Education, Nation Building, Peace Making, Intergroup Collaboration, Nigeria, Civic Responsibility, Social Cohesion

9.0. Introduction

Tertiary education in Nigeria plays a pivotal role in shaping the nation's social, political, and economic development. Universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education are charged not only with producing skilled manpower but also with nurturing citizens who are socially responsible, ethically grounded, and capable of contributing to national development. In a diverse society like Nigeria, marked by differences in ethnicity, religion, and culture, tertiary institutions serve as spaces where national unity, peace, and intergroup collaboration can be fostered.

The Nigerian higher education system provides opportunities for students and staff from various backgrounds to interact, engage in dialogue, and collaborate on academic and social projects. Through teaching, research, community engagement, and extracurricular activities, tertiary institutions instill values such as integrity, empathy, tolerance, and civic responsibility. These values are essential for nation building, reducing societal tensions, and promoting collaboration across groups.

This chapter focuses on the critical roles of tertiary education in promoting nation building, peace making, and intergroup collaboration in Nigeria. It highlights how institutions influence social cohesion, ethical leadership, research-informed policy, and community development. The discussion underscores the importance of deliberate strategies to maximize the impact of tertiary education on national unity and social harmony.

9.1. Conceptual Terms

▪ Nation Building

Nation building refers to the deliberate process of constructing or structuring a national identity, social cohesion, and institutional framework that fosters political stability, economic development, and social unity. It involves creating a sense of shared purpose, citizenship, and belonging among diverse groups within a country. In Nigeria, a country characterized by ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, nation building entails promoting inclusive governance, equitable resource distribution, national integration, and the development of institutions that serve the



collective interest of all citizens (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 2021)).

Tertiary education plays a crucial role in nation building by producing skilled manpower, nurturing civic consciousness, and promoting values such as integrity, patriotism, and social responsibility. Through education, students learn about national history, governance structures, and their roles as responsible citizens. Programs that encourage interethnic interaction, civic engagement, and leadership development further contribute to creating a unified national identity, reducing sectionalism, and promoting national development.

- **Peace Making**

Peace making is the process of resolving conflicts, preventing violence, and establishing harmonious relations among individuals, groups, or nations. It involves negotiation, mediation, reconciliation, and the implementation of strategies that address the root causes of disputes. In multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria, peace making is essential for maintaining stability, fostering cooperation, and ensuring sustainable social and economic development (World Bank. 2022).

Tertiary institutions contribute to peace making by providing platforms for dialogue, debate, and critical engagement. Academic programs in conflict resolution, law, political science, and social sciences equip students with the knowledge and skills to mediate disputes and advocate for non-violent solutions. University-driven research on social justice, governance, and community development also informs government policies and local initiatives aimed at mitigating conflict. Moreover, student-led organizations, inter-university forums, and cultural exchange programs create opportunities for understanding, tolerance, and reconciliation among diverse groups.

- **Intergroup Collaboration**

Intergroup collaboration refers to cooperative interaction between different social, ethnic, religious, or cultural groups to achieve shared objectives, solve problems, and promote mutual understanding. It is a critical mechanism for fostering social cohesion, reducing prejudice, and promoting collective action in diverse societies. Effective intergroup collaboration encourages dialogue, builds trust, and ensures equitable participation in social, economic, and political processes (Orlunga, & Alikor, 2025)..

Intergroup collaboration is fostered through group projects, joint research initiatives, cultural and academic competitions, and community service programs. Students and staff from diverse backgrounds work together, develop negotiation and teamwork skills, and gain appreciation for different perspectives. Such collaborations not only enhance educational outcomes but also



prepare graduates to function effectively in a multicultural society, contribute to national unity, and support sustainable development through collective problem-solving.

9.2. Result and Discussion on Critical Roles of Tertiary Education in Promoting Nation Building, Peace Making, and Intergroup Collaboration in Nigeria

Tertiary education in Nigeria plays a fundamental role not only in intellectual and human capital development but also in fostering national cohesion, peace, and intergroup collaboration. Given Nigeria's diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural landscape, tertiary institutions are uniquely positioned to cultivate understanding, dialogue, and cooperation among different groups. The following six roles illustrate the critical contributions of tertiary education in promoting nation building, peace making, and intergroup collaboration:

▪ Development of Skilled and Responsible Citizens

Tertiary education equips individuals with knowledge, critical thinking skills, and professional competencies that enable them to contribute meaningfully to society. Graduates are expected to understand their civic duties, uphold ethical standards, and engage in responsible decision-making. By instilling values such as integrity, empathy, and social responsibility, tertiary institutions produce citizens who can participate constructively in governance, community development, and conflict resolution (Ogunode, & Ayeni, 2023). A well-educated populace is less susceptible to manipulation by divisive political rhetoric, hate speech, or misinformation. Graduates trained in social sciences, law, education, and peace studies, for example, are often at the forefront of mediating conflicts, promoting dialogue, and supporting policies that encourage equity and justice. Thus, tertiary education serves as a foundation for building an informed citizenry capable of sustaining national development and social harmony (Nte, Kangiwa, & Nwachukwu, 2026).

▪ Promotion of National Unity and Integration

Nigeria's diversity requires deliberate efforts to cultivate a sense of national identity that transcends ethnic, religious, and regional divides. Tertiary institutions provide platforms where students from different backgrounds interact, collaborate, and learn from each other. Through joint academic projects, student organizations, intercollegiate competitions, and cultural festivals, universities and colleges promote understanding, respect, and appreciation for diversity (Nkang, & Uwah, 2021). These interactions foster mutual trust, reduce prejudices, and encourage cooperative relationships across different groups. By bringing together young people from various



ethnic and cultural backgrounds in shared learning environments, tertiary institutions contribute to national cohesion and a unified vision for Nigeria's development (Ibebunjo, & Iroye, S. 2018)).

- **Research and Policy Development for Peace and Conflict Resolution**

Tertiary institutions are centers of knowledge creation and research. Through interdisciplinary studies, faculty and researchers examine the root causes of conflicts, including economic disparities, social injustice, political tensions, and ethnic rivalries. Research findings inform policy development, peacebuilding strategies, and government interventions aimed at preventing or resolving conflicts (Ominyi, 2025). Institutions also conduct seminars, workshops, and conferences on peace, human rights, and conflict management, providing evidence-based solutions to societal problems. By generating actionable knowledge, tertiary institutions play a direct role in shaping national strategies for maintaining peace, fostering collaboration among diverse groups, and promoting sustainable development (Salmi, 2009; Orlunga, & Alikor, 2025).

- **Cultivation of Ethical Leadership and Civic Responsibility**

Tertiary education instills leadership skills, ethical reasoning, and civic consciousness in students. Leadership training programs, debate societies, student governments, and community service initiatives encourage students to take active roles in governance, social advocacy, and conflict mediation (Augustine, 2025). Graduates trained in ethical leadership are better equipped to make decisions that prioritize social welfare over personal or group interests. They can serve as mediators in disputes, advocates for equitable resource distribution, and leaders who promote inclusive policies. By producing leaders who value justice, accountability, and collaboration, tertiary education contributes to national stability and intergroup harmony (World Bank. 2022)).

- **Promotion of Dialogue, Tolerance, and Intercultural Understanding**

Tertiary institutions provide environments where diverse ideas, cultures, and belief systems coexist. Exposure to different perspectives encourages dialogue, empathy, and tolerance among students, staff, and faculty. Courses in social sciences, history, law, ethics, and cultural studies equip learners with the knowledge and skills to navigate diversity constructively (Aluede, Oviawe, Imhangbe, & Ehiaguina, 2019)). Programs that encourage intercultural engagement such as exchange programs, cultural festivals, and collaborative projects enable students to recognize common values, appreciate differences, and develop negotiation and collaboration skills. This intercultural competence is essential for reducing tensions, mitigating conflict, and fostering collaborative problem-solving at local, regional, and national levels (Adegbam, 2020)).



- **Community Engagement and Social Responsibility**

Tertiary institutions serve as hubs for community outreach and social development initiatives. Through service-learning projects, volunteer programs, and partnerships with local communities, institutions connect students and staff with real-world challenges. These engagements encourage social responsibility and collective action in addressing local and national issues such as poverty, youth unemployment, environmental degradation, and communal disputes (Ajibola, & Okafor, 2023)). By working together with community members, students learn to negotiate, collaborate, and implement solutions that benefit diverse groups. Such programs also provide opportunities for conflict prevention, peace promotion, and community empowerment, strengthening the bonds between different societal groups and contributing to nation building (Onyendi, 2024)..

9.3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Tertiary education is a cornerstone of nation building, peace making, and intergroup collaboration in Nigeria. The chapter demonstrates that Nigerian universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education play multifaceted roles in creating skilled and responsible citizens, promoting national unity, conducting research for conflict resolution, cultivating ethical leadership, fostering dialogue and tolerance, and engaging communities in social development.

By providing opportunities for intercultural interaction, dialogue, and collaboration, tertiary institutions help reduce ethnic and religious tensions and encourage collective problem-solving. Graduates from these institutions are better equipped to assume leadership roles, mediate disputes, and contribute to national development. Moreover, research conducted within these institutions informs policies on social justice, peacebuilding, and equitable development, further enhancing the country's capacity for sustainable growth. In the absence of robust tertiary education systems that actively promote these values, Nigeria risks persistent social divisions, conflicts, and weakened national cohesion.

- i. Tertiary institutions should include courses and programs focused on peace studies, conflict resolution, ethics, and civic education to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary for nation building and intergroup collaboration.
- ii. Institutions should organize forums, workshops, cultural festivals, and exchange programs that encourage students and staff from diverse backgrounds to interact, collaborate, and develop mutual understanding.
- iii. Universities and research centers should prioritize studies on societal conflicts, governance, and development challenges. Findings should be disseminated to inform government policies, community interventions, and peacebuilding initiatives.



- iv. Students and staff should be actively engaged in community development projects, volunteering, and service-learning programs that foster collaboration and social responsibility while addressing local and national challenges.
- v. Leadership training programs, student governments, and mentorship initiatives should emphasize ethical conduct, accountability, and public service to prepare graduates for responsible roles in society.
- vi. Policies should ensure equitable access to education, promote tolerance, and protect the rights of all groups within tertiary institutions. Mechanisms for addressing discrimination, bias, and intergroup conflicts should be established and enforced.
- vii. Collaboration with external stakeholders can enhance peacebuilding, development programs, and policy implementation, thereby extending the impact of tertiary education beyond campus boundaries.

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Concluding Synthesis

The second edition of *Sustainable Education in Africa* advances the discourse on educational transformation by offering a deeper, more nuanced interrogation of the structural, technological, and socio-economic forces shaping education systems across Nigeria and the African continent. Building upon the foundations established in the first edition, this volume expands its analytical scope to incorporate emerging paradigms such as digital ecosystems, artificial intelligence–driven educational planning, climate-responsive education, and the evolving nexus between education, economic resilience, and sustainable development.

A cross-chapter synthesis reveals that sustainable education in Africa is no longer a singular policy objective but a dynamic, multi-layered process requiring systemic alignment across governance, infrastructure, pedagogy, and innovation ecosystems. The contributions collectively underscore that while technological advancements—particularly in digital learning platforms, data analytics, and artificial intelligence—offer unprecedented opportunities to enhance access, efficiency, and quality, their transformative potential remains contingent upon enabling environments characterized by robust infrastructure, policy coherence, institutional capacity, and equitable resource distribution.

The volume further highlights the persistence of entrenched structural challenges, including chronic underfunding, socio-economic inequalities, policy inconsistencies, insecurity, and weak institutional frameworks. These constraints continue to limit the scalability and sustainability of educational reforms. Notably, the second edition places greater emphasis on the interconnectedness of these challenges, illustrating how deficits in governance, economic stability, and social inclusion directly impact educational outcomes.

Importantly, this edition reframes education as a strategic driver of national competitiveness, innovation, and social cohesion within a rapidly changing global landscape. It reinforces the imperative for education systems to move beyond traditional models toward adaptive, inclusive, and future-oriented frameworks that are responsive to both global trends and localized realities.

Ultimately, this volume contributes to advancing scholarly and policy-oriented conversations by offering integrated insights that bridge theory, practice, and innovation. It serves as a critical resource for stakeholders seeking to navigate the complexities of educational transformation while fostering systems that are resilient, inclusive, and aligned with sustainable development imperatives.

Implications for Practice

Drawing from the expanded insights of this second edition, the following strategic implications are proposed for policymakers, educational leaders, practitioners, and development partners:

Policy Innovation and Systems Thinking:

Governments should adopt adaptive, data-driven policy frameworks that integrate sustainability, digital transformation, and inclusivity into long-term national development strategies. Emphasis should be placed on policy continuity, monitoring mechanisms, and cross-sectoral coordination.

Digital Transformation and Emerging Technologies:

There is an urgent need to scale investments in digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence applications, and smart learning environments. Educational systems must harness technology not only for access but also for personalized learning, predictive planning, and administrative efficiency.

Sustainable Financing Models:

Beyond traditional funding mechanisms, innovative financing approaches—including public-private partnerships, education bonds, and international development funding—should be explored to ensure long-term sustainability and resilience of education systems.

Capacity Development for the Future Workforce:

Continuous professional development must evolve to include digital competencies, interdisciplinary teaching approaches, and innovation-driven pedagogy. Educators should be equipped to prepare learners for emerging global labor markets.

Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice:

Policies and interventions must go beyond access to address systemic inequalities affecting marginalized groups, including gender disparities, rural-urban divides, and learners with special needs. Inclusive education should be embedded as a core principle rather than a peripheral objective.

Research, Data, and Evidence-Based Practice:

Institutions should strengthen research capacity and promote the use of real-time data analytics to inform decision-making, policy formulation, and educational innovation.

Strengthening Institutional Resilience:

Education systems must be designed to withstand disruptions such as economic shocks, pandemics, and conflicts by incorporating flexible delivery models, blended learning systems, and crisis-responsive policies.

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:

Sustainable transformation requires coordinated engagement among governments, academia, industry, civil society, and international organizations to leverage expertise, resources, and innovation.

Editors' Note

The editors are pleased to present the second edition of *Sustainable Education in Africa*, which reflects an expanded and enriched body of knowledge responding to the evolving complexities of education systems within the continent.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the contributing authors whose scholarly contributions demonstrate exceptional rigor, depth, and forward-thinking perspectives. Their work not only builds upon the foundations of the first edition but also introduces new dimensions that address contemporary challenges and emerging opportunities in education.

We also acknowledge the invaluable role of peer reviewers, editorial board members, and institutional collaborators whose commitment to academic excellence has ensured the credibility, relevance, and quality of this publication. Their contributions have been instrumental in shaping this volume into a comprehensive and impactful resource.

This second edition is conceived as more than an academic compilation; it is a strategic platform for advancing dialogue, informing policy, and inspiring innovation in education across Africa. It reflects our collective commitment to fostering educational systems that are inclusive, resilient, and aligned with sustainable development goals.

It is our expectation that this volume will serve as a catalyst for further research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and transformative action, ultimately contributing to the continuous evolution of education systems across the continent.