

# Teaching National Identity in Multicultural Classrooms: A Study on Social Studies Education and Sociological Perspectives of Inclusion

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the challenges and strategies associated with teaching national identity in multicultural classrooms, emphasizing the need to balance national unity with cultural diversity. As classrooms become increasingly diverse, educators face difficulties in promoting a cohesive national identity while respecting students' varied cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. The study examines these challenges through the lens of sociological theories such as Social Identity Theory, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Social Integration Theory, which provide frameworks for understanding how to foster inclusion and address historical inequalities. The research highlights key issues, including the risk of marginalizing minority perspectives, ensuring culturally sensitive representation, and overcoming linguistic barriers. It also explores effective strategies for teaching national identity, such as adopting culturally responsive pedagogy, encouraging critical engagement with national narratives, and incorporating multilingual approaches. Recommendations for policymakers and curriculum developers include supporting inclusive education policies, investing in teacher training, and designing curricula that reflect diverse perspectives and address social justice issues.

**Keywords:** National identities, multicultural classroom, social studies, sociological perspectives

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The concept of national identity has long been central to the field of social studies education, where fostering a sense of national belonging is often a key objective. In many countries, including Nigeria, social studies curricula are designed to cultivate patriotic values, national cohesion, and an understanding of civic duties among students (Ikenyiri & Nnorom, 2021). National identity, as a collective sense of belonging to a nation-state, is particularly important in promoting social integration and unity, especially in regions with diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. However, teaching national identity in multicultural classrooms presents significant challenges, as it necessitates balancing the promotion of national unity with the recognition and respect for students' diverse cultural identities.

Globalization and increasing rates of migration have led to a dramatic rise in multicultural classrooms across the world, where students from various cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds are educated together (Banks, 2019). This shift presents a new dynamic in education, where traditional methods of teaching national identity may not sufficiently address the complexities of cultural diversity. In the Nigerian context, the multicultural classroom is not only a product of migration but also a reflection of the country's intrinsic diversity, comprising over 250 ethnic groups, various religious affiliations, and multiple languages (Ugochukwu, 2020). This rich diversity brings with it the challenge of teaching a national identity that is inclusive of all these backgrounds while preventing any form of marginalization or alienation.

In multicultural settings, the question of how to teach national identity without reinforcing dominant cultural narratives or excluding minority perspectives is critical (Merryfield, 2020). Traditionally, social studies education has often centered on the dominant national culture, language, and history, sometimes neglecting the stories and contributions of marginalized groups. Agulanna, (2018) observed that this creates a disconnect for students who may not see their cultural heritage reflected in the national narrative being taught, leading to feelings of exclusion and a weakened sense of national identity. Thus, educators are tasked with the complex responsibility of creating a 'balanced approach' to teaching national identity that is inclusive and acknowledges the multifaceted nature of the nation-state.

Giroux, (2022) argued that the sociological perspective on education emphasizes the role of schooling in either perpetuating social inequalities or serving as a tool for social cohesion. In this context, schools can either reinforce dominant cultural norms or act as spaces where diversity is celebrated and where all students can see themselves reflected in the nation's identity. Sociological theories such as critical race theory (CRT) and social identity theory provide valuable frameworks for understanding how students from different cultural backgrounds perceive national identity and how educational institutions can foster a more inclusive sense of belonging (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Tajfel, 2021). These theories suggest that inclusive education practices should go beyond mere tolerance of diversity to actively engage with and affirm students' multiple identities.

Recent studies conducted by Adalakun, (2022) shows that students in multicultural classrooms often experience conflicts between their ethnic or cultural identities and the national identity being promoted in school. This is especially true in post-colonial societies like Nigeria, where the national identity is often constructed around colonial legacies and excludes the narratives of indigenous and minority groups. Anderson & Martin, (2023) argued that there is a growing need for educational strategies that not only promote social cohesion but also acknowledge and integrate the diverse cultural contributions to the national fabric.

The growing interest in multicultural education highlights the importance of developing curricula and teaching methods that are inclusive and reflective of the diverse backgrounds of students (Banks, 2019). Scholars like James Banks (2021) argued that a multicultural approach to education can enhance students' understanding of national identity by presenting multiple perspectives and encouraging critical thinking about what it means to belong to a nation-state. This requires a shift from a monolithic view of national identity to one that is dynamic, pluralistic, and inclusive of all cultural groups within the nation.

The teaching of national identity in multicultural classrooms presents a significant challenge for educators. Balogun & Akintola, (2023) posited that in many countries, including Nigeria, where classrooms are increasingly composed of students from diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, social studies education plays a critical role in shaping students' understanding of what it means to belong to a nation. However, the traditional approach to teaching national identity often emphasizes a singular, dominant narrative that may not reflect the diverse experiences and identities of all students (Banks, 2019). Corroborating this view, Adalakun, (2022) noted that as a result, students from minority or marginalized backgrounds may feel excluded or alienated from the national identity being promoted in the classroom.

In such contexts, the inclusive teaching of national identity becomes a complex task, as educators must balance the goal of fostering a unified sense of national belonging with the need to respect and affirm the diverse cultural identities of their students (Olatunde & Okeke, 2023). This complexity is particularly pronounced in Nigeria, where the socio-political landscape is deeply influenced by ethnic, religious, and cultural divisions. Failure to adopt an inclusive approach to national identity education risks perpetuating these divisions and undermining social cohesion (Agulanna, 2018).

Moreover, sociological perspectives suggest that schools have the potential either to reproduce societal inequalities or to act as spaces for social integration. Giroux, (2022) posited that in multicultural classrooms, where students bring a wide range of cultural perspectives and experiences, it is critical that teaching

practices do not inadvertently marginalize certain groups or reinforce existing power structures. However, little is known about how Nigerian educators navigate these challenges, what strategies they use to promote an inclusive national identity, or how students from diverse backgrounds perceive these efforts.

Therefore, this study seeks to address the gap in research by exploring how national identity is taught in multicultural classrooms, identifying the challenges educators face in promoting inclusion, and examining the perceptions of students from diverse backgrounds. This study will contribute to understanding how social studies education can foster both national cohesion and cultural inclusivity, while providing insights into effective teaching strategies that reflect the realities of a multicultural society.

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION ANALYSIS

According to Gordon & Keane, (2022) national identity refers to a person's sense of belonging to a nation and the shared characteristics that define the nation as a cohesive whole. This concept encompasses cultural, historical, linguistic, and sometimes religious factors that contribute to the collective identity of a nation-state (Banks, 2019). In the field of social studies education, national identity plays a crucial role in shaping students' understanding of their country and their responsibilities as citizens. Adeyemi, (2021) posited that social studies curricula often aim to foster patriotism, civic engagement, and national unity, all of which are viewed as essential for creating responsible and informed citizens who contribute to the stability and progress of the nation.

However, the teaching of national identity is particularly complex in multicultural societies, where students come from diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. In such contexts, educators are faced with the challenge of promoting a sense of national cohesion while recognizing and respecting the cultural identities of all students (Ikenyiri & Nnorom, 2021; Adelakun, 2022). This is especially true in Nigeria, where social studies education must account for over 250 ethnic groups and multiple religions, making the teaching of a unified national identity a highly sensitive and intricate task.

In the opinion of Banks, (2021) traditionally, the teaching of national identity in social studies has often been monolithic, focusing primarily on the dominant national narrative, which may neglect the experiences and contributions of minority groups. This has led to criticisms that such an approach can alienate students from marginalized communities, leading to a weakened sense of national belonging. In contrast, there is a growing recognition that social studies education must adopt a multicultural approach to national identity, one that presents multiple perspectives and acknowledges the diverse cultural contributions that shape the nation (Agulanna, 2018).

A more inclusive approach to national identity education involves integrating the histories, cultures, and experiences of all groups within the nation into the curriculum. This ensures that students from diverse backgrounds can see themselves reflected in the national narrative, which in turn fosters a stronger sense of belonging and commitment to the nation (Merryfield, 2020). By teaching national identity in a way that celebrates diversity, social studies education can play a pivotal role in promoting social cohesion and mitigating ethnic, cultural, or religious tensions within society.

### Multicultural Education Theories

Banks, (2019) multicultural education is an educational approach that seeks to address the diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds of students in the classroom. It aims to provide an inclusive learning environment where all students, regardless of their background, feel valued and represented. In the context of teaching national identity, multicultural education theories offer valuable insights into how to create curricula and teaching practices that are inclusive and reflective of the diversity present in society.

One of the most influential scholars in this field, Banks, (2021) developed the multicultural curriculum model, which outlines four levels of multicultural education. These are, the contributions approach, the

additive approach, the transformation approach, and the social action approach. Banks' model emphasizes the importance of the transformation and social action approaches, which go beyond token inclusions of diversity and actively engage students in critical thinking about their society's structure and their role in shaping it. Merryfield, (2020) opined that these approaches are particularly relevant in the teaching of national identity in multicultural classrooms, as they allow students to critically examine the concept of national identity from multiple cultural perspectives and engage in discussions about what it means to be a member of a diverse nation.

Another important theory in multicultural education is Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), which seeks to bridge the gap between students' home cultures and the school culture (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Okonkwo, 2023). CRP advocates for teaching classroom that recognize and value the cultural backgrounds of students and use these as assets in the learning process. In teaching national identity, a culturally responsive approach would involve incorporating the cultural knowledge, experiences, and values of all students into lessons on national identity, ensuring that students see their cultural heritage as an integral part of the nation's identity.

Critical Multicultural Education (CME) is another significant theory, which critiques the power dynamics in traditional education systems that marginalize minority groups (Giroux, 2022). CME advocates for an education that challenges these power structures and promotes social justice by empowering students from marginalized communities. In the context of national identity education, critical multicultural education would involve critically examining how the nation's history and identity have been shaped by issues of power, privilege, and inequality. This approach encourages students to challenge dominant narratives and engage in discussions about creating a more inclusive national identity.

### **Sociological Perspectives on Inclusion in Education**

From a sociological perspective, inclusion in education refers to the extent to which schools accommodate and integrate students from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that all students have equal access to learning opportunities. In the context of teaching national identity, sociological theories provide valuable frameworks for understanding how education systems can either reinforce social inequalities or promote social integration (Giroux, 2022).

One key sociological theory relevant to this discussion is Social Identity Theory, which explores how individuals derive a sense of identity from their membership in social groups (Tajfel, 2021). In multicultural classrooms, students often belong to multiple social groups based on their ethnicity, religion, or culture. Peter & Chong, (2023) argued that teaching national identity in such a context requires educators to acknowledge and affirm these multiple identities, rather than forcing students to choose between their cultural identity and their national identity. Social Identity Theory suggests that a pluralistic approach to national identity, which allows students to see themselves as both members of their cultural group and the nation, can promote a more inclusive sense of belonging.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is another sociological perspective that is increasingly applied to education. CRT examines how race, privilege and ethnicity shape social structures, national identity and the distribution of power within society (Ladson-Billings, 2021). In the context of teaching national identity, CRT encourages educators to critically examine how national narratives may marginalize certain racial or ethnic groups and to adopt teaching practices that challenge these inequalities. CRT advocates for a more inclusive approach to national identity education that acknowledges the contributions and experiences of historically marginalized groups, thereby promoting a more equitable and just society.

Social Integration Theory is also relevant to the discussion of inclusion in education. This theory posits that schools play a key role in integrating individuals into society by promoting shared values and norms (Khalil & Holmes, 2023). Schools are seen as key institutions for promoting social cohesion. By teaching national identity in a way that reflects the values and contributions of all cultural groups, educators can enhance students' sense of belonging to the broader society (Giroux, 2022). In multicultural classrooms, teaching

national identity can contribute to social integration by fostering a sense of common purpose and belonging among students from different cultural backgrounds. However, for this to be effective, educators must ensure that the national identity being promoted is not exclusionary or based solely on the values and experiences of the dominant group. According to Ibrahim & Adeoye, (2023) social integration should be achieved by promoting a pluralistic national identity that recognizes and celebrates the diversity of the nation's population.

Adopting James Banks' Multicultural Curriculum Model, educators can integrate diverse cultural perspectives at every level of the curriculum. The transformation and social action approaches of this model involve restructuring the curriculum to reflect multiple viewpoints and encouraging students to actively engage in addressing social issues related to national identity and inclusion (Banks, 2019).

Also, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) is another important strategy of repute. This teaching strategy emphasizes the importance of incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum, ensuring that they feel their cultural identity is valued. Olatunde & Okeke, (2023) argued that this strategy calls for educators to use culturally relevant materials, examples, and activities that reflect the diversity of the classroom.

Another method of importance is Critical Pedagogy. This strategy emphasize the need to encourage students to critically engage with the national narrative, particularly in terms of power structures, inequality, and historical exclusions. By allowing students to challenge dominant national narratives, educators can promote a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of national identity (Giroux, 2022).

Inclusive Dialogue and Student Agency strategy advocate for providing spaces where students can express their identities and experiences in relation to the national identity being taught. This promotes a classroom culture of openness and inclusivity, where multiple narratives can coexist.

Plurilingualism strategy stress the need to recognize and incorporate multiple languages into the curriculum where relevant, acknowledging the linguistic diversity within the classroom. Nwafor & Adedoyin (2023) posited that this will fosters a sense of inclusion for students whose first language is not the dominant language of instruction.

The teaching of national identity in multicultural classrooms requires educators to draw on both multicultural education theories and sociological perspectives on inclusion. Adopting a pluralistic and inclusive approach to national identity education, schools can promote social cohesion while respecting the cultural identities of all students. This approach not only benefits individual students by fostering a stronger sense of belonging, but it also contributes to the development of a more inclusive and unified society.

### **Determinants of Students Perception in Multicultural Classroom**

Taylor & Jenkins, (2022) define perception as the process through which individuals interpret and make sense of sensory information, shaping their understanding and response to the world around them. In the context of education, students' perceptions play a crucial role in shaping their attitudes, motivations, and engagement with learning. Understanding how students perceive their learning environment, teachers, and subjects is essential for creating strategies that enhance educational outcomes. Recent studies indicate that students' perceptions are influenced by various factors, including the teacher-student relationship, classroom environment, and relevance of the curriculum to their lives (Adelakun & Okafor, 2023).

One of the most significant factors shaping students' perceptions is the quality of the teacher-student interaction. Obi & Adeniran, (2022) posited that when students perceive their teachers as supportive, empathetic, and approachable, they are more likely to engage positively with the subject matter and participate actively in class. A positive relationship fosters a sense of belonging and safety, which is crucial

for learning. Conversely, if students perceive their teachers as distant or unapproachable, their motivation to learn can decrease, leading to disengagement and lower academic performance.

Another important aspect influencing students' perceptions is the classroom environment. Studies show that students who perceive their classroom as inclusive, respectful, and conducive to learning tend to perform better academically (Yusuf & Akinwale, 2023). An environment that encourages collaboration and critical thinking can enhance students' perceptions of the learning process, making them more invested in their education. On the other hand, a hostile or competitive classroom atmosphere may lead to feelings of anxiety or alienation, further hindering their academic growth.

Additionally, the relevance of the curriculum to students' lives significantly impacts their perceptions. Olumide, (2023) assert that when students can relate the material they are learning to their personal experiences or future goals, they are more likely to perceive education as meaningful and valuable. This connection between the curriculum and real-world applications enhances student engagement and motivates them to invest more effort into their studies.

However, students' perceptions are not uniform and can vary based on factors such as socioeconomic status, cultural experiences. Research indicates that students from marginalized backgrounds may perceive their background, and prior education differently due to systemic barriers and social inequalities (Adebayo & Nwogu, 2022). For these students, fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment is particularly critical in shaping positive perceptions.

### **Benefits of Teaching National Identity in a Multicultural Classroom**

Teaching national identity in a multicultural classroom, particularly in a diverse country like Nigeria, offers numerous benefits that extend beyond fostering national unity. Firstly, it promotes social cohesion by helping students understand and appreciate the diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds of their peers. In a nation characterized by significant ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity, such as Nigeria, a well-crafted national identity curriculum can bridge cultural divides and foster mutual respect and understanding among students from different backgrounds (Olatunde & Okeke, 2023).

Ogunyemi, (2023) posited that by incorporating diverse perspectives into the teaching of national identity, educators can create a more inclusive environment that acknowledges and values the contributions of various ethnic and cultural groups. According to Agulanna, (2018) this approach not only enriches students' understanding of their country's history and culture but also validates their own cultural identities, which can enhance their self-esteem and engagement in the learning process. When students see their own histories and traditions reflected in the curriculum, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and connection to their national identity.

Additionally, teaching national identity in a multicultural context can reduce prejudices and foster intercultural dialogue. Exposure to different cultural narratives and histories helps students to challenge stereotypes and biases, promoting a more nuanced and empathetic understanding of others (Okpala, 2023). This is particularly important in Nigeria, where historical and ongoing ethnic tensions can be alleviated through education that emphasizes commonalities and shared values.

Furthermore, Aderibigbe, (2022) observed that a comprehensive national identity education prepares students for active citizenship by encouraging them to engage with and contribute to the nation's development in an informed and responsible manner. It instills a sense of national pride and responsibility, motivating students to participate in civic activities and work towards national progress. This engagement is crucial for fostering a cohesive and prosperous society, as it aligns students' personal identities with broader national goals.

In summary, teaching national identity in Nigeria's multicultural classrooms promotes social cohesion, enhances students' self-esteem, reduces prejudices, and prepares students for active citizenship. By adopting inclusive and culturally responsive approaches, educators can leverage national identity education as a tool for unity and national development.

### **Challenges in Teaching National Identity in Multicultural Classrooms**

Teaching national identity in multicultural classrooms is a complex task due to the diverse backgrounds, values, and perspectives that students bring into the learning environment. Banks, (2021) posited that in multicultural settings, national identity cannot be taught through a single narrative or perspective, as doing so may alienate or marginalize students from minority or historically underrepresented groups.

One of the most significant challenges is finding a balance between promoting a unified sense of national identity and respecting the diverse cultural identities of students. In many instances, the concept of national identity is tied to the dominant culture or historical narrative, which may not represent the experiences of all students, particularly those from minority backgrounds (Agulanna, 2018). This can lead to feelings of exclusion, as students may struggle to see themselves as part of the national identity being promoted. As noted by Banks (2019), social studies curricula often emphasize a dominant national narrative that neglects the contributions and perspectives of marginalized groups, resulting in a disconnect between the curriculum and the lived experiences of diverse students. For example, in Nigeria, where ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity is vast, a national identity curriculum that focuses predominantly on the experiences of one group—whether ethnic or religious—can create tensions among students who feel their identities are being overlooked or devalued (Adelakun, 2022). The challenge, therefore, lies in constructing a national identity that promotes unity without erasing or diminishing the cultural and ethnic identities of students from various backgrounds.

Another major challenge is ensuring that the teaching of national identity is culturally sensitive and reflective of the diversity within the classroom. Teachers must be mindful of the different cultural and ethnic identities represented among their students and avoid presenting national identity as a homogenous or monolithic concept. This requires according to Adeyemi, (2021) a curriculum that is inclusive and reflective of the contributions of all groups within the nation, not just the dominant ones.

However, many educators lack the necessary training and resources to effectively teach national identity in a way that is culturally responsive. As a result, they may rely on outdated or biased materials that fail to account for the rich diversity of their students' backgrounds (Ikenyiri & Nnorom, 2021). In some cases, educators may also unintentionally reinforce stereotypes or cultural biases by focusing too heavily on one narrative or cultural perspective, which can further alienate students from minority backgrounds.

The challenge is further complicated by the fact that cultural representation in national identity education often extends beyond the content of the curriculum to the methodology of teaching. Culturally diverse students may have different ways of understanding and expressing identity, and traditional teaching methods may not be effective in engaging all students equally. As Ladson-Billings (2021) notes, adopting culturally responsive pedagogies that acknowledge and incorporate the cultural backgrounds of students into the learning process is essential for fostering a more inclusive approach to national identity education.

A third challenge in teaching national identity in multicultural classrooms is addressing the historical inequalities and power dynamics that have shaped the nation. In many countries, including Nigeria, the historical narrative that forms the basis of national identity is often one of colonialism, ethnic conflict, and social hierarchies (Adelakun, 2022). Teaching this history in a way that acknowledges these realities while promoting a sense of national pride and unity can be difficult.

Many students from marginalized or historically oppressed groups may feel that the dominant narrative of national identity does not reflect their experiences or the struggles their communities have faced. Critical

Race Theory (CRT) highlights the need for educators to critically examine the power structures and inequalities that have historically shaped the concept of national identity (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Educators must navigate the challenge of teaching a national identity that is both inclusive and honest about the nation's past, without perpetuating harmful power dynamics or reinforcing feelings of marginalization among minority students.

Furthermore, the legacy of colonialism often complicates the teaching of national identity in post-colonial societies. In Nigeria, for example, the imposition of colonial borders and systems of governance has contributed to the creation of a national identity that is often at odds with the pre-existing cultural identities of various ethnic groups (Agulanna, 2018). This legacy continues to influence how national identity is understood and taught, making it difficult for educators to create a sense of shared identity that resonates with all students.

In multicultural classrooms, language can also pose a challenge in teaching national identity. Many countries, including Nigeria, have multiple languages spoken by different ethnic groups. National identity is often tied to the official language or languages of the country, which may not be the native language of all students. Adelokun, (2022) opined that this can create a sense of alienation for students who do not speak the dominant language fluently, as they may feel excluded from the national identity being taught in the classroom.

In some cases, language can also serve as a marker of cultural identity, and students may feel that their cultural heritage is being devalued if their language is not included in discussions of national identity. Educators must find ways to be inclusive of all languages and cultures represented in the classroom, while also promoting the use of a common language that facilitates communication and unity among students.

Students in multicultural classrooms may also experience resistance or conflict when engaging with lessons on national identity. For some students, their cultural or ethnic identity may be in tension with the national identity being promoted, leading to feelings of internal conflict or resistance to adopting the national narrative (Merryfield, 2020). For example, in a classroom with students from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, certain national symbols, narratives, or historical events may hold different meanings for different students, resulting in varying degrees of acceptance or rejection of the national identity being taught.

Students may also feel that their personal or cultural identity is at odds with the national identity being promoted, leading to a sense of disengagement from lessons on national identity. In such cases, it becomes important for educators to create a classroom environment that encourages open dialogue and allows students to express their multiple identities, rather than forcing them to choose between their cultural identity and their national identity (Tajfel, 2021).

In many countries, the teaching of national identity is heavily influenced by political and ideological agendas, which can create challenges for educators. National identity education is often shaped by the political climate of the country, with governments using the curriculum to promote specific political ideologies or narratives (Giroux, 2022). In some cases, this can result in a narrow, one-dimensional view of national identity that does not allow for critical engagement or reflection on the complexities of the nation's history and identity.

Educators may find themselves under pressure to adhere to government-mandated curricula that prioritize certain narratives or exclude others, making it difficult to adopt a more inclusive or critical approach to national identity education. This can be particularly challenging in multicultural classrooms, where students may have diverse political or ideological perspectives that conflict with the national narrative being promoted in the curriculum.



In fact, teaching national identity in multicultural classrooms presents a range of challenges, including balancing unity and diversity, ensuring cultural sensitivity and representation, addressing historical inequalities, overcoming linguistic barriers, managing student resistance, and navigating political pressures. Despite these challenges, adopting inclusive, culturally responsive, and critical approaches to national identity education can help create a more equitable and engaging learning environment for all students, ultimately fostering a sense of national belonging that reflects the diversity of the nation's population.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the teaching of national identity in Nigeria's multicultural classrooms plays a vital role in fostering social cohesion, enhancing student engagement, and preparing future citizens for active participation in national development. By embracing a curriculum that reflects the diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds of students, educators can bridge cultural divides and promote a sense of unity that respects and values the contributions of all groups. This approach not only enriches students' understanding of their nation's history and identity but also empowers them to engage with their society in a more informed and responsible manner. Implementing culturally responsive teaching strategies and inclusive curricula helps mitigate prejudices, challenge stereotypes, and create an educational environment where every student feels seen and valued. As Nigeria continues to navigate its rich tapestry of ethnic and cultural diversity, the integration of national identity education that acknowledges and incorporates this diversity is crucial for building a cohesive, respectful, and engaged society. Ultimately, a robust approach to teaching national identity supports the development of a national consciousness that is inclusive and reflective of Nigeria's pluralistic society, thereby contributing to a more unified and progressive nation.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

To effectively address the challenges of teaching national identity in multicultural classrooms, it is crucial for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to adopt strategies that embrace inclusivity and diversity. Teachers should prioritize culturally responsive teaching by integrating diverse perspectives and materials that reflect their students' cultural backgrounds. This involves creating classroom environments where students feel comfortable expressing their identities and engaging in discussions that acknowledge their varied experiences. By fostering a space where students can critically examine national identity and challenge dominant narratives, teachers can promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of the nation's diversity.

Policymakers play a vital role in shaping education policies that support multicultural education. They should focus on developing and implementing policies that emphasize the importance of inclusive curricula and ensure that national identity education reflects the diverse experiences of all citizens. This includes investing in professional development for teachers to equip them with the skills necessary for culturally responsive teaching. Additionally, promoting multilingual education policies can help acknowledge and incorporate the linguistic diversity within the classroom, ensuring that all students' linguistic identities are valued and represented.

Curriculum developers must design educational materials that incorporate multiple perspectives on national history, culture, and identity. This involves integrating the contributions of minority groups and addressing historical inequalities and power dynamics within the curriculum. By focusing on critical pedagogy, curriculum developers can ensure that national identity education not only promotes unity but also engages students in meaningful reflections on social justice and inclusivity. This approach helps build a curriculum that resonates with all students and encourages active participation in shaping a more inclusive national identity.

Fostering inclusivity in national identity education requires a concerted effort from educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to create environments and materials that respect and reflect the diverse backgrounds of students, while promoting a unified sense of national belonging.

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