

Topic: National Consciousness and Identity

Meaning of National Consciousness and Identity

National Identity refers to the level of awareness of individuals towards the issues relating to the overall growth of the nation.

National Consciousness is a shared sense of national identity; that is, a shared understanding that a group of people share a common ethnic/linguistic/cultural background. National consciousness refers to an active and emotional awareness of what is happening to one's nation and how this affects one and the people around. National consciousness can also be defined as a set of opinions, feelings and beliefs shared by citizens of the same nation. Historically, a rise in national consciousness has been the first step towards the creation of a nation. National consciousness, at a glance, is one's level of awareness, of the collective, and one understands that without "them" there is no "us". It is the mere awareness of the many shared attitudes and beliefs towards things like family, customs, societal and gender roles, etc. This awareness allows one to have a "collective identity" which allows them to be knowledgeable of not only where they are, but how those places and people around them are so significant in that they ultimately make the collective, a nation. In short, national consciousness can be defined as a specific core of attitudes that provide habitual modes for regarding life's phenomena.

National Identity

This is one's identity or sense of belonging to a state or nation. It is the sense of a nation as a cohesive whole, as represented by distinctive traditions, culture, language and politics. National identity may refer to the subjective feeling one shares with a group of people about a nation, regardless of one's legal citizenship status. National identity is viewed in psychological terms as "an awareness of difference", a "feeling and recognition of 'we' and 'they'".

The expression of one's national identity seen in a positive light is patriotism which is characterized by national pride and positive emotion of love for one's country. The extreme expression of national identity is chauvinism, which refers to the firm belief in the country's superiority and extreme loyalty toward one's country.

National Identity and Its features

There are three factors which helped in the creation of a national identity:

- i. progress in the field of printing and innovation of vernacular languages
- ii. Bond between national identity and culture
- iii. Analogous symbols and ritual.

National consciousness is derived from shared values, traditions and memories within a particular culture which is thought of and spoken in a particular language. Despite vernacular not being the inevitable foundation for the birth of national consciousness, yet it does preconditions that creation. Spread of mass education and literacy not only empowered the opportunity of communication among the people where nation and state were coextensive, but also fortified a strong sense of community. The development of English, French and German languages and education based upon school system led to the creation of a powerful national consciousness. The culture and language imposed by the state symbolizes 'nationalism which engenders nations.' If succeeded in imposing, the state further manages to develop apart from political a combination of several relationships including economic, territorial, religious, linguistic and cultural. It is this state which creates a nation.

In the second place, the next point with regard to national identity is the precise meaning of national identity. Identity is a matter of self study, it is a psychic and social attempt at recognizing one's entity in societies which describe and unite them. National identity is the product of national communities. The defining criteria of identity are: continuity over time and differentiation. Continuity lies in the historical roots, differentiation originates from forming a community with a shared culture, adhere to concrete territory distinguishing between original inhabitants and outsiders – members and 'strangers'.

This identity fulfills three functions:

1. It enables to select such as right to take decision about their common political identity
2. It materializes the cultural relationship, with others because nation is a common field of their cultural and social activities.
3. It strengthens individuals to identify with an entity which transcends them.

Thirdly, in the creation of national identity, a powerful role is also played by symbols and rituals. Nation is a community which has common features within itself and differences from other. The usage of symbols and regular observance of rituals produce the consciousness of integrating a community. By favoring occasions in when they feel united and by displaying symbols that represents its unity, a nation establishes the distinction from others. To cite an example a soldier sacrifices his life at the altar of death for the prestige of his flag because he inherently identifies flag with his country. Symbols hide the differences and upholds common belonging and through rituals individual feel an unfathomed intensity of oneness that evoke sentiment of inborn and instinctive like-mindedness and common experiences of historical past and future resolutions.

Differences Between National Consciousness and National Identity

National Identity and National Consciousness are closely related and can often be mistaken for each other. There is, in fact, a thin line between the definitions of the two, however, national identity can be defined as the feelings someone shares with a group of people about a nation. National consciousness is a specific core of attitudes that provide the minutia of the day-to-day phenomena of life in one's country. National identity, like national consciousness, is a feeling of

recognition of “we” and “they”. One important distinction between the pair is that the national identity spectrum embodies Patriotism and Chauvinism.

National identity is more tangible than mental in comparison to national consciousness. The elements of national identity include the nation’s symbols, traditions, and memories. National consciousness is more sensual and personal; it’s different for each single person. It can’t necessarily be seen since it is more mental than national identity.

Features of National Consciousness

1. Progress in the field of printing and innovation of vernacular languages
2. Bond between national identity and culture
3. Analogous symbols and ritual.

Topic: National Symbols and Their Meanings

Introduction

National Identity on the other hand refers to the act of belonging and identifying with a nation. National identity refers to national symbols. These include:

- **National Flag:** The Nigerian Flag was designed by Mr. Taiwo Akinkunmi in 1958. It has two colours: White and Green. White colour stands for peace and unity while the green stands for Agriculture. It is placed in important public places like schools as sign of patriotism.



- **Nigerian Coat of Arm:** This is an emblem which shows the unity of the country. The black shield represents the good soil of the country, the eagle represents strength, the two white horses represent the dignity and pride of the country. The mark by the shield represented by ‘Y’ represents River Niger and River Benue which flow through parts of Nigeria. The Flower represents beauty of the nation. Unity and faith is written in the Coat of arms which stands as the motto of the country.



The National Anthem: This is song that Nigerians have accepted to sing as a symbol of unity and readiness to serve the country. It is a promise of loyalty to the country.

The Wordings of the National Anthem Includes:

Arise o compatriots

Nigeria call obey,

To serve Our Father Land,

With love and strength and faith,

The labour of our heroes past,

Shall never be in vain,

To serve with heart and might,

One nation bound in freedom, peace and unity.

Second Stanza –

O God of creation,

Direct our noble cause,

Guide thou our leaders right,

Help our youth the truth to know,

In love and honesty to grow,

And live in just and true,

Great lofty heights attain,

To build a nation where peace

And justice shall reign.

National Pledge: This is solemn promise by Nigerians that they would be loyal and obedient to the country and they would promote its good image.

The Wordings of the National Pledge

I pledge to Nigeria my country

To be faithful, loyal and honest,

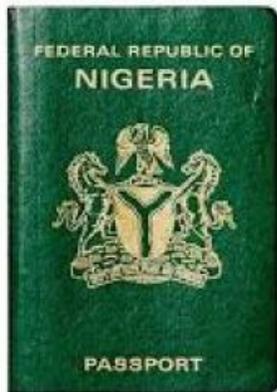
To serve Nigeria with all my strength,

To defend her unity,

And uphold her honour and glory,

So help me God.

- **The Nigerian Passport:** This is document issued by the federal government to the citizens who wish to travel out of the country as a means of identity for such individuals.



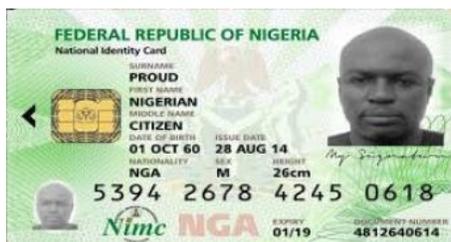
- **The Federal Capital:** This is meeting point of all the ethnic groups in the country. It is situated in Abuja.



- **The Currency:** This has to do with the transaction means peculiar to the country. These currencies are universally accepted as a means of exchange.



- **The Constitution:** This is an established body of laws and principles under which the country is governed.
- **The National Identity card:** This is a card issued to Nigerians as symbol of identity.



- **Unity Lamp:** This serves as national light and binds Nigerians together.

Topic: National Symbols and Their Meanings (II)

Introduction

Nigeria national symbols are symbols of entity that project the Nation to the world as a United National community. National symbols intend to unite people by creating visual, verbal, or iconic representations of the national people, values, goals, or history.

These set of symbols are often rallied around as part of celebrations of patriotism or aspiring nationalism (such as independence, autonomy or separation movements) and are designed to

be inclusive and representative of all the people of the national community. The following are the list of the national symbols and their meanings:

1. Nigerian Flag

The Nigerian flag was designed by Mr. Michael Taiwo Akinkunmi during a National Flag Design competition in 1959 and was officially hoisted on October 1, 1960 being Nigeria's Independence Day. He was rewarded with a sum of 100 pounds the official currency in the country at that time

The flag is a horizontal bi-colour of green and white. The two green stripes on the Nigerian flag represent Nigeria's agricultural wealth, while the white strip on the Flag represents peace and the collective national wealth and prosperity of the country.

However, there are rules governing the hoisting of the Nigeria flag and its maintenance. First, on no account should any other flag be raised higher than the Nigerian flag. The Nigerian flag must be hung on important days or any important event. For instance, in cases of death across the country, the Nigerian flag is hoisted at half-length to respect the fallen heroes. The flag must be hoisted at sunrise and lowered at sunset. Finally, if for any reason, the Nigerian flag get torn, it must be replaced.

2. Nigerian Coat of Arm

The Nigerian coat of arms was officially adopted in May 1960. Every item found on the coat of arms has a special meaning in Nigeria's history. On close observation one would find a shield, horses, navy bands, an eagle and some colourful plants at the lower part of the shield.

All these represent the rich diversity and historical splendour of our country. For instance, the black shield denotes Nigeria's fertile soil, supported by two horses or chargers on each side. The horses symbolises dignity. The eagle represents strength, while the green and white bands on the top of the shield represent Nigeria's rich soil and beauty of the land. The coat of Arms carries the Nigerian motto "Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress"

3. National Anthem

The Nigerian national anthem takes into cognisance the account of our historical past as well as the aims and aspirations for the coming generation. The beautiful thing about the Nigerian national anthem is the bond it has on all Nigerians both home and abroad.

It is a clarion call to serve our fatherland with love and strength and faith. One can safely say that the National anthem is one of the most important symbols of the country.

The current Nigerian National anthem "Arise O' Compatriot" was adopted in 1978. It replaced the former National Anthem (Nigeria, We Hail Thee). The lyrics was coined form the five best entries (Eme Etim Akpan, , John A Ilechukwu Sota Omoigui, P. O. Aderibigbe and B A Ogunnaike) in a national contest while the words were put to music by Benedict E. Odiase , the then director of Nigerian Police Band

4. National Pledge

The Nigerian National pledge is an oath of allegiance of support of the country. Often times, it is recited after the National anthem. The National pledge was drafted by a Nigerian Professor, Prof (Mrs.) Felicia Adebola in 1976 and in September 1976, General Olusegun Obasanjo decreed that all schools children should recite the national pledge on daily basis. The national pledge goes thus:

I pledge to Nigeria my country

To be faithful loyal and honest

To serve Nigeria with all my strength

To defend her unity

And uphold her honour and glory

So help me God

5. **Nigerian Naira**

The legal tender of every country is also a national symbol. Just like Morocco boast of Riyadh, Benin republic boast of its Franc, Ghana its cedis, so also Nigeria has its own Naira. The naira is Nigeria's official legal tender since 1973. It is used in day to day transaction within the country.

The central Bank of Nigeria is the only authorized issuer of the Naira. On different denominations of the Nigerian Naira (#5, #10, #20, #50, #100, #200, #500 and #1000) , the pictures of heroes of the Nigerian country is inscribed. The #50 notes most especially denote unity in diversity. The presence of various tribes and culture was fully depicted in the #50 note.

6. **Nigeria Armed forces**

The Nigerian Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Air force) are the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in charge of defending the territorial integrity of the country. the armed forces are a unique symbol of our national unity. on several occasions, they have fought for the course of the Nigerian state, Africa and the world at large in various peacekeeping missions which has earned them international recognition.

On the foreign soil, the Nigerian armed forces represent Nigeria. the same is said of other countries. Their distinct service uniform differentiates them from other armed forces in other countries of the world.

7. **National flower**

Majority of Nigerians do not know that the country has a national flower as part of her national symbol. The national flower is a wonderful flower called **Costus spectabilis**.

This flower grows in the wild and it is found all over Africa.

